

STRANGE COMPANY

By

S. THEODORE FELSTEAD

HUTCHINSON & CO. (Publishers), LTD.
PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE ANCHOR PRESS, Tipton, ESSEX

INTRODUCTION

I am not one of those foolish people who believes that truth is stranger than fiction, for manifestly it must be possible to invent stories that are completely outside the bounds of credibility.

But in the course of a career which has brought me into contact with many strange creatures who, either from necessity or choice, depend upon their wits for a living, I have run across many remarkable stories which, I think, will be all the more readable in that they are perfectly true.

A good many of the tales in this book have been related to me by detective officers whom I have met from time to time, and they are, I think, of great interest in that they reveal the extraordinarily diverse types of humanity that are dealt with by a Criminal Investigation Department.

Where, for instance, could you find such an impudent rascal as the individual who committed the gross sacrilege of stealing the Nelson Relics and afterwards coolly walked into Scotland Yard to claim the reward? Or the Fence who Fooled the Force? They are picturesque characters, these men, endowed, no doubt, with audacity of nature which might have been employed to better ends.

except preposterous vanity, could any sane woman pose as a princess of Royal blood knowing perfectly well that sooner or later humiliating exposure was bound to come?

I have also told a few of the strange stories of events that happened in the great silent war of the Secret Services. One day, I hope, it will be possible to tell more.

THE AUTHOR.

London, 1930.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION - - -	v
I. THE CASE OF THE NELSON RELICS - -	9
II. A VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES - -	21
III. THE DOPE DEVIL - - -	33
IV. THE MAN WHO MISSED HIS WAY - -	47
V. THE GRAND DUCHESS'S PEARLS - -	59
VI. FIRE ! FIRE ! FIRE ! - - -	71
VII. BUNTY PULLS HER LAST STRING - -	83
VIII. A DRAMA OF THE GHETTO - - -	95
IX. BLUE BLOOD À LA CARTE - - -	107
X. THE FENCE WHO FOOLED THE FORCE - -	117
XI. THE FORGER - - -	139
XII. BLACKMAIL - - -	141
XIII. ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR - -	159
XIV. SECRET SERVICE - - -	173
XV. AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT - - -	187
XVI. THE SHIP SCUTTLERS - - -	199
XVII. A TALE OF TWO FACES - - -	215
XVIII. THE MURDERER AND THE MIRACLE - -	237
XIX. A STRANGE STORY OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS - -	251

THE CASE OF THE NELSON RELICS

THE CASE OF THE NELSON RELICS

SEVEN years is quite a big slice out of a man's life, especially when an unkind judge has decreed that he spends the "lagging" in that salubrious spot known to the fraternity as "The Moor."

And there is no doubt also that Mr. Billy Carter, expert "screwsman" and general utility man in the thieving profession, felt a distinct grievance in being compelled to waste what should have been seven of the best years of his life at Dartmoor Prison for next door to nothing. As he remarked on more than one occasion to the unbelieving gentleman who ministered to his spiritual needs :

"Gawd blimey, Chaplain, I wouldn't ha' minded if I'd 'a got sumfin. But a few lousy old sword-'ilts and a 'kettle' as no fence 'ud touch ! It's wicked, that's wot it is."

"Well, there you are," said the chaplain. "You ought to know better."

One may say that the chaplain was right ; Mr. Carter should have known better, in more ways than one. In the first place he should never have stolen what he did ; in the second place he should not have rushed in where the angels proverbially fear to tread. And just as well, perhaps, that he never got to hear how it actually came about that he was doing a seven years' "lag" at Dartmoor.

It worried him night and day how the police had ever found the evidence that had convicted him, and I daresay no one has enlightened him from that day to this.

The British burglar, taking him all in all, is not a bad sort of fellow. He usually makes it a practice to steal only from those who can afford to lose and he almost invariably shrinks in horror from "knocking off" articles of sentimental value.

One regrets to say, therefore, that Mr. William Carter made a sad break from the etiquette of the profession when, one Saturday afternoon in December, 1900, he laboriously climbed into the Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital. He went in through a window, when no one was about, so it may be inferred that he was there for no good purpose.

William did not know exactly what he wanted. He certainly knew that he was broke to the wide, and previous experience had taught him that public institutions were easy for an agile Cockney who mixed a little thieving with a life on the ocean wave.

His roving eye found attraction in a glittering display of gold in some show-cases right in the centre of the hall. Not having enjoyed the honour of serving His Majesty, except in one of H.M. Prisons, he did not know that the tempting show of gold chasing lying before his greedy eyes represented the hilts of swords of honour presented by various grateful bodies to the great Lord Nelson. It probably would not have troubled him if he had known, because vandalism was a word he had never heard of. Without giving the matter a second thought, he whipped a jemmy out of his pocket, prised open the show-cases, and without further ado unceremoniously bundled all the sword-hilts into a bag he carried, along with a few other things which seemed of value — a watch, a gold seal or two, and various other oddments. Altogether, William felt quite satisfied with himself as he climbed out of the window, still unseen, and safely made his way back to the dingy riverside haunts where he had his being.

Now, you may rob a bank, or a jeweller's shop, or someone who can well afford to be robbed, without bringing a nest of hornets about your ears, but you certainly cannot rob a nation of its historical treasures without arousing a storm of indignation calculated to set all the telephones of Scotland Yard buzzing with angry orders. It began to dawn upon Mr. Carter a few days after the Case of the Nelson Relics had assumed the aspect of a sensational murder that he had made a sad blunder in ever trying his luck in the Painted Hall. The Yiddisher gentleman in Whitechapel to whom he took his plunder amply corroborated his misgivings.

"Twenty pounds," he grunted firmly, "and like as nod I'll be geddin' twenty years' penal servitude."

"Twenty pounds!" exclaimed William. "You damned shyster, it's worth fifty at the least! You can't twist me like that."

"Twenty id is, or noddings."

William thought long and hard, swallowed a lump in his throat that made him feel like murder, then held out his hand.

"Gimme the money," he growled, "and by the Gawd Almighty I'll get even with you some day."

In the meantime the hunt for the robber of the Nelson Relics grew keener every day. With public indignation at fever-heat, Scotland Yard flooded Dockland with their C.I.D. officers anxiously seeking a word here or there that would lead them to the missing heirlooms. Every "fence" received a "turning over" that made him squirm; every gold dealer in London had to satisfy police that he had not melted down any medals or sw

A reward of £200 offered by the Government had no effect; an appeal to the patriotism of the thief—if he ever possessed any—proved equally unavailing. And so time went on, and in a few weeks the Case of the Nelson Relics passed into the limbo of the lost. Newer

sensations came along to titillate the public palate and except for the people directly concerned in catching the culprit there was an end of the episode.

Mr. Carter, for his part, was perfectly prepared to let bygones be bygones. In fact, he was so anxious not to rake up old sores that when public fury was at its height he went down to a shipping office, signed on as "O.S.," and embarked on a ship to Australia, firmly convinced that 12,000 miles of water would be the safe barrier he could put between himself and a horde of detectives. With what remained of the Nelson Reliance safely stowed away beneath his dirty clothing, he went aboard with a crowd of equally frowsy specimens of humanity, had a few tart words with an irate quartermaster who wanted to know what gaol he had come out of, and then sulkily "turned to" as the steamer set her nose for the long journey South.

What happened in the Case of the Nelson Reliance in the three years that elapsed before the public again heard of them is a long story that only Mr. Carter could properly tell. As he lay in his fo'c'sle bunk moodily tossing to and fro, he cursed in his fluent Cockney vocabulary the evil day he had broken into the Painted Hall and stole things that had caused him nothing but trouble. Nelson's watch and seal were in his possession, but for all the good they were to him they might just as well have been back in their proper resting-place.

In quiet moments, unseen by his shipmates, he took out the watch, looked curiously at the engraving on the gold case, and wondered whether, when he got to Australia, someone might not give him a "fiver" for it. Its sentimental value never troubled him in the least, sentiment not being one of William's weaknesses. All that worried him for the immediate present was the prospect of getting to Australia, where he intended to "skin out" at the earliest opportunity.

With an advance of pay in his pocket, William promptly fulfilled his intentions the day after his ship arrived at Sydney, not bothering to say goodbye to anyone. He liked the look of the place and thought it would be strange indeed if he could not get a good living there. The people seemed easy-going and good-natured; there was plenty of cheap beer and unlimited free counter-lunch—altogether an eminently suitable place of residence for anybody hostile to hard work as William was.

Time continued to go on, as is its habit. From Sydney, William gravitated to Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, occasionally as far afield as Fremantle, where he once more "skinned out" from his A.U.S.N. boat and went up to the goldfields with the intention of making a fortune. He raised the price of the fare to Kalgoorlie and landed in that town with a terrible thirst and little or no money to quench it. Hospitable inhabitants stood him innumerable drinks, and then, in answer to his query about gold-digging, poked him in the ribs and told him to go back to London.

However, something had to be done, and in sheer desperation he got a job hewing quartz in a mine that seemed to be a million feet below the earth. It was certainly very hot there, and besides, William couldn't get on with the brawny Australians. They used to mimic his Cockney accent, tell him his "fice" made them tired and various other unpleasantries of a personal nature. And all the time it burnt a hole in William's conscience to think that he had hidden away in a belt something that he knew to be worth hundreds of pounds—if only he dared take a chance.

Down the 400 miles of parched country through which the goldfields railway runs to Perth he made his way back to civilisation, got down to Fremantle, and in a state of comparative starvation signed on a steamer Sydney-bound. A great resolution fired him;

when a shabbily-dressed young man wandered in, looked round as though he would like to make a bolt, and then, in answer to the officer, muttered something about wanting to see someone.

"Who is it you want to see?" demanded the constable.

Another hasty glance round proved even less assuring, but escape seemed hopeless. Much against his will, the caller blurted out that he wanted to know whether there was still a reward for the Nelson Relics.

"A friend of mine asked me ter call," he added unconvincingly.

There were no flies on the constable.

"You sit down in there, my lad," he replied, taking the visitor by the arm and pushing him into a waiting-room. "I'll send upstairs and see about the matter."

The waiting-room seemed an even more uncomfortable place—it had bars upon its windows—and the ten minutes that went by before the constable opened the door appeared to be ten hours.

"Come on," ordered the officer brusquely. "You will go with this gentleman," indicating someone with "detective" written all over him.

It was no use protesting, and William—for it was he—was safely escorted along what seemed to be endless green corridors, with everything around ominously bare—before he found himself ushered into a room where there sat a keen-faced man whose attitude was not quite sympathetic as it might have been. Beyond a brief introduction, "This is the man, sir," William had no knowledge of whom he was meeting, but his heart beat frantically, while all the time he reviled himself for being such a damned fool as to walk right into Scotland Yard.

"You want to ask about the reward for the Nelson Relics?" began the Chief Inspector. "What do you know about the matter?"

"A friend o' mine told me sumfin' abart 'em," said William somewhat lamely. "'E arsked me to call 'ere

"He did, eh? What's your friend's name?"

"I cawn't tell yer. I promised I'd keep me mou shut abart that."

"Where does he live?"

"I cawn't tell yer that."

"Then what's your name?"

"My name don't matter. I think I'll be goin' now edging towards the door."

"You stop where you are, my lad," said the Chief Inspector sternly. "I think I'd like to know a bit mo about you. Just write me your name and address pushing pen and paper before the sweating William. I'd like to keep in touch with you."

William, anxiously leaning over the Chief Inspector desk all the time, hastily scrawled his name and whereabouts as requested and then once more made a dash for the door. He could not see the flash in the Chief Inspector's eyes as he glanced at the ill-formed letter or he might have made one desperate bolt for liberty. Instead, in response to a curt command to wait a minute he stood still anxiously wondering what was going to happen next.

Something did happen—and in a very short space of time. A bell rang, and there appeared as if by magic the same individual who had brought him upstairs.

"Take this man," said the Chief, indicating the unhappy William, "and keep him in your room until I send for him."

Even stranger things took place the moment William had vanished. The Chief began sweeping all the papers off his desk, then spoke on the telephone. A smart-looking man came in, and to him the Chief said, "Take this and have the fingerprints developed."

"This" was indeed a strange article to hand anybody

nothing less than the thick plate glass over his desk. But beyond a brief "Very good, sir," the new arrival said nothing; he seemed quite accustomed to such peculiar happenings.

The clock on the Chief's mantelpiece ticked on for a quarter of an hour, when there came another knock at the door. This time it announced more definite news. The gentleman who had so injudiciously left his fingerprints on the plate glass had been discovered to be one William Carter, ex-convict, with quite a long record of "time," and a photograph indisputably taken in prison.

William came back, hoping for he knew not what.

"I am going to detain you," said the Chief, "on suspicion of being involved in the theft of the Nelson Relics."

"Wot, me?" cried William. "Why, guv'nor, I was in Orstralia when that took place. An' I've only just got back."

In proof thereof he agitatedly supplied the address of the place he had gone to on landing in England, and swore by all his gods that he had never stolen the Nelson Relics. But the Chief decided to take a chance, and so William, protesting volubly, was taken over to Cannon Row to await developments.

At his lodgings, where the Chief conducted a stringent search, there was no trace of the Nelson Relics. At the docks he was found to have gone ashore with a trunk and two Gladstone bags; only one Gladstone reposed at his shabby lodging-house. Where could the other have gone?

Throughout the whole of Sunday the Chief and half a dozen men inquired at railway station cloakrooms and parcel offices, and late at night, at the Custom House Station in the East End of London, he found the missing Gladstone. But where were the Nelson Relics?

Certainly not there. A few dirty old clothes and a dilapidated concertina such as any sailorman might play were of no use to a country anxious to regain relics of its sailor hero. Tired and dispirited, the Chief went home, and over a late supper recounted the disappointments of the day to his wife.

"All we found in the bag," he was relating, when suddenly his wife jumped up.

"Didn't you look inside the concertina?" she cried.

The Chief dropped his knife and fork in astonishment.

"I never thought of it! What a fool I am! What's the time? I might be able to get back there to-night."

"Let it wait. Eat your supper and go back first thing in the morning."

At five o'clock next morning, in the presence of a stationmaster all agog with curiosity, William's shabby old Gladstone was once more brought in. A screwdriver speedily laid open the interior of the concertina, and there, as the Chief's wife had predicted, reposed all that remained of the missing Nelson Relics. Only the watch and the seal remained, but they were sufficient, as William found to his cost, for the jury who interestedly listened to the Case of the Nelson Relics, and the judge who had to pass sentence, to decide that Mr. Carter had committed an unpardonable act of sacrilege and must therefore be kept in penal servitude for seven years.

VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES

A VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES

THE Black Maria went clattering through the stone-arched gateway of the "Scrubs," came to a halt in front of the reception office, and then slowly disgorged the unfortunate individuals whom the law had ordered the hospitality of the Crown.

The chill atmosphere of the prison struck a responsive chord in the heart of Mr. Davy Dorman, for the time he would be at the "Scrubs" represented but an insignificant portion of the period he was likely to spend behind bars and bolts. Five years' penal servitude was Davy's little lot, and he didn't like the idea at all. It wouldn't have been so bad had he done anything; no really good crook minds a "lagging" so long as he has had his money's worth.

But, as a matter of fact, Davy had got his nap hand for being nothing short of a fool. In a rash moment, when the wine was in and wit was out, he had undertaken to negotiate the transfer of a sum of money which did not belong to him, and by one of those unfortunate chances which could occur only once in a million times, things went wrong.

It rankled in his mind to think that there had half a dozen of them in the scheme and that he was only one to fall. "Why me?" he had been mu to himself ever since the judge at the Old Bailey sentence upon him.

The answer to his passionate question would, no have been that he was the only man caught, but reply would not have consoled Davy in the leas

looked with carping disfavour at the unsavoury little crowd who had come down with him in the Maria, and then, at the command of the warder in charge, slowly dragged himself into the office to undergo the all-too-familiar ordeal of being "received." What he wanted to do more than anything else was to unburden himself to some sympathetic soul.

"Back again, eh?" growled the Chief Warder as he caught sight of Davy. "I thought you told me the last time you were here that you were going to give this game the go-by?"

"I dessay," said Davy shortly. "An' a nice chance they give you to turn it in. I come out six months ago with two quid an' a suit o' clothes as would 'a got me a stretch the first time I walked down Regent Street. I do the money the night I'm out and then I meets some o' the boys. 'You're all right, Davy,' they says. 'We've got some good work for you to do.'"

"Well, what happened then?"

"Oh, they had something for me to do all right," mumbled Davy. "It was me that was the damned fool for taking it on. They told me it was as safe as the Bank of England, and so it might 'a been if they'd done their part properly. Gawd, it makes me sick to think what a — juggins I've been. Five years! Gawd!"

The Chief was not an unsympathetic man. Fate had made him a prison warder, but he had a wife and family outside the gaol gates to whom he went home every night, and he knew, none better, how often a comparatively innocent man was made to suffer for the sins of others. He looked at poor Davy staring miserably out of the
with a good deal more kindness in his
been expected, inquired again how

Davy was in that dangerous mood which requires tactful handling. A kindly word would have sent him to his cell in a comparatively contented frame of mind; the least sign of brutality, and he would just as cheerfully commit murder. The Chief Warder hadn't been in his job for many years without knowing how to deal with human savages. He cleared off the men who were waiting to have their fingerprints and photographs taken, told Davy to sit down, and then heard the whole wretched story.

"It's like this," Davy began. "I come out last September practically without a tosser, but I didn't mind that. I got up to a boozer in Clerkenwell which the boys use, and there they told me about a wonderful scheme they was goin' to work.

"I don't mind tellin' you, Chief, I was game for anythin'. You don't know what it is to be broke to the wide after comin' away from a place like Dartmoor. There was a nice little lot of the boys in it—Jerry Kennaway, Bill Nunn, Tommy Loughran, and one or two more I dessay you know as well as I do.

"It certainly sounded all right. They'd got a couple of post office men straightened, and the idea was, with a duplicate key, to open one of the pillar-boxes where there was likely to be plenty o' letters containin' money.

"So far as I could judge, Chief, they'd got somethin' pretty big in view. One of the crowd had got a postman's uniform as well as a mailbag. His job was to come along five minutes before the regular clearing time, open the box, and walk round the corner where there would be a car waitin' for him.

"They picked out half a dozen spots where the pillar-boxes would be sure to contain plenty of letters with cheques in them—the Stock Exchange and other places like that. A feller named Bob Harrison was to be the postman."

"I see," remarked the Chief Warden interestedly. "Quite a clever little idea. And what were you to do, Davy?"

"I'm comin' to that," said Davy. "I was the mug, though I didn't know it at the time."

"Among the boxes they reckoned to clear was one up in Hanover Square used by Ladbroke's, the big book-makers. It was Jerry Kennaway who said we'd be sure to get any number of cheques from there, and so it was decided that one of us should watch Ladbroke's clerk post the letters on Saturday containing the money for settling day on Monday."

"That part of the business went off all right. Bob Harrison came along with a snide bunch of keys looking as good a postman as you ever saw in your life. He scooped about five hundred letters into his bag, and was back at the little place in King's Cross where Jerry and the boys were waitin' for him before ten minutes had gone. It was easy, Chief, dead easy. They'd done it any number o' times before, and worked the cheques through dud little banks like Farrows, only too anxious to open an account with anyone."

"This, Davy," said the Chief, "is quite a good yarn you are telling me. I can't keep you here to listen to the remainder of it, but I'll come along to your cell in the morning. Just behave yourself and you'll be all right."

The light of the aggrieved was still in Davy's eyes when the Chief opened his door at 11 o'clock the following day. He morbidly watched the Chief sit down on his stool and then opened fire once more.

"As I was sayin', Chief, they'd worked quite a lot of cheques. The trouble was that some one had to take the risk of gettin' the money from the banks. They weren't anxious to do that themselves, the dirty dogs. Oh, dear, no. It was poor silly swine like me they was after—fellers without a bob who'd do anything to

make a bit on the cross or any other way. They made a hell of a fuss of me, lushed me up, and told me the tale properly. Said all I'd got to do was to take the cheque to the bank and ask for the money.

"I'll say this : there was nothing wrong with the scheme right up to the time you put the cheque across the counter. They spent all Saturday afternoon goin' through the letters, steamin' open the ones that looked promisin' an' stickin' 'em down again when they was no good.

"I want to tell you, Chief, that I've nothin' to do with all this. I knew, of course, that I was wanted for somethin' crooked, but they took jolly good care that I learnt no more than they could possibly help. It was the 'busy' who knocked me off who told me what a fool I'd been and exactly how they had worked the game.

"The little lot that brought me here was a cheque for £220 made out to some gent in Hull, but they must have got plenty more, because the 'busy' said they'd worked one for £475 through a bank and got the money, besides others they couldn't properly trace.

of the gent as is written on it. I dessay there was some one else in the business whose name he gave as a reference. At any rate, Chief, he gets the account opened with the 220 quid and then tells me that he'll want me next day.

"They didn't want me to go into the bank myself. Jerry says my face would cruel the game for sure. What I have to do is to play the old dodge with the messenger boy and make a run for it if anyone takes a tumble.

"I wanted to know how long the cheque had been in the bank.

" 'Plenty of time to get it cleared,' " says Jerry. 'You've got nothing to worry about.'

"I wasn't quite so sure of that, so I asked him to tell me when the cheque had been paid in and how long it would be before it would be safe to draw the money.

" 'It was paid in this morning,' Jerry tells me, 'and you're to draw the money about half-past two to-morrow afternoon. Get it in £10 notes and bring it back here as soon as you can.'

"The more I thought about it, Chief, the less I liked it. It seemed to me nothing better than an even money chance, and I wanted better odds than that. Still, as you know, Jerry has a bit of a way with him. He gives me a few more drinks, tells me the game's been worked fifty times before without anyone gettin' knocked off, and leave me with the idea that I'm well on the road to becoming a millionaire. I'm to have fifty quid for myself.

"Well, the next day he meets me just before lunch and gives me a cheque for £200 on the bank at King's Cross, signed in the name of the gent with the account. I go off to King's Cross and sit down in a restaurant for lunch, and while I'm havin' it I say to the waiter gentlemanly-like: 'I wonder if you could get me a messenger boy?'

" 'I'll see what I can do, sir,' the waiter informs me. 'You may have to wait a bit.'

get you one round the corner, we'll lend you a boy of our own.'

" 'Thank you very much,' says I politely. 'That will do nicely.'

" In about a quarter of an hour's time, just as I'm drinkin' up my beer, he returns with a kid as is willin' to run a message.

" 'Ah, there you are, my boy,' I exclaims. 'I want you to go to the bank for me and cash this cheque. I've put a note inside the envelope to say how I want the money. Mind nobody stops you on the way back. There'll be half-a-crown waitin' for you as soon as I see you again.'

" He goes off, Chief, and leaves me in a pretty state of nerves. I keeps saying to myself it's six to four on a tumble, and to steady myself I tells the waiter to bring me a double Scotch and soda. I didn't mean to waste any time if the boy came back all right. A taxi and a quick get-away was all I wanted.

" The time went on and the boy didn't turn up. I told the waiter to bring me another double. I drank that up, but still the boy didn't come. I had a pretty fair idea by then that somethin' had gone wrong, but like the mug I am I stop there hopin' for the best. I thought maybe they was busy in the bank and had kept the boy waitin'.

" Just about three o'clock I saw him comin' in. I sat still, pretendin' not to be excited. I could feel my hand fairly itchin' for the money, but before I could get hold of it I got a terrible shock. The boy came up to me, and suddenly two fellows I knew very well followed him.

" 'This is the man,' says the boy, pointing to me.

" 'Oh, are you Mr. So-and-So who gave this boy a cheque to cash?' asks one of the men.

" I knew I was a goner, Chief, but I didn't let on. They was a couple of 'busies' from the local division, and though they didn't know me by sight, I knew it wouldn't be long before they'd get hold of somebody who did.

" I had a good look at the door to see if there was any chance there.

" ' Don't waste your time looking outside,' remarked one of the ' busies,' quite rude. ' When you go out the door you'll go out with us.'

" ' Now then,' they goes on, ' what about it ? Where did you get that cheque ? '

" ' From a gentleman friend o' mine,' I replied. ' He's a bookmaker in a big way o' business and couldn't spare the time to come down here.'

" ' Where does he live ? '

" ' What's that got to do with you ? '

" ' We won't waste any more time arguing with you says one who seems to be the boss. ' We'll take you inside and see what you have to say there.' "

Davy paused and looked up at the Chief with a bit of a grin on his face.

" It was just touch and go, Chief," he said, " that I didn't give 'em the slip then. They was takin' me through the door when I suddenly let out a back kick and made 'em let go. But by a bit o' bad luck I barge right into a big fat feller comin' in, and by the time I finished with him the two ' busies ' had got hold of me again.

" They didn't make any mistake after that. One of them whipped out the bracelets, called a taxi, and hiked me off to the station before I knew where I was.

" I find quite a nice little party waiting me : the manager of the bank, the cashier, and some one who seemed to be a clerk from Ladbrokes. How in the name o' Gawd he got there so quick I don't know ; it was about the worst tumble I was ever in. One way and another there's quite a tidy crowd : myself, the two ' busies,' the boy, and the little lot from the bank.

" ' What's all this about ? ' I demands. ' How dare you arrest an innocent man ? '

"Just as I was gettin' this off my chest I had a bit more bad luck. Who should walk in but the D.D.I.

" 'Hullo, Davy !' he says. 'Don't tell me you're at it again ?'

" 'I'm not,' I answers him quite short. 'A friend asked me to cash a cheque for him, and this is what I get for it.'

" 'It's very sad,' the D.D.I. tells me, 'but the fact of the matter is, Davy, the money you thought you were going to get with that cheque doesn't belong to your friend. I don't mind telling you that it has been stolen, and although I'm very sorry for you, I'm going to charge you with forging and uttering.'

"They offered to make it lighter for me if I'd tell 'em who was in it with me, but I'm not like that, Chief. They knew quite as well as I did ; what they wanted me to do was to turn King's Evidence, and I wouldn't stand for that. Would you ?"

"I don't know about that," replied the Chief. "Five years is a long time, Davy. Maybe you'll change your mind when you've been here a month or two. Did they never tell you how you came to be caught ?"

"Oh, that's easy enough. It was asking for trouble to try and draw the money so quick. I knew that. The boys looked after me all right at the Bailey, but they might just as well have kept their money in their pockets. A mouthpiece can't do you no good when you're caught in the act. But one of these fine days, Chief, I'll do 'em. If I get a decent cheque worth puttin' down I'll bag the lot and they'll never see me again."

"All right, Davy," said the Chief, getting up and going out. "You think out a plan to get your own back. There's plenty of time before you."

THE DOPE DEVIL

THE DOPE DEVIL

To the best of my recollection, it was some time in 1917, when the struggle for world supremacy was at its height, that "dope" first made its appearance in London. Ugly rumours were about that soldiers were doping themselves with cocaine, obtained from Heaven knows where. Investigations soon established the truth of the stories, but before the evil could become widespread the authorities stamped it out, and temporarily, at least, suppressed the traffic.

But the habit remained, and for some years afterwards the dope trade was a profitable source of livelihood to hundreds of those depraved creatures who batten on the frailties of the human race. In time, reluctant officialdom awoke to the menace, and what had previously been punishable with six months' imprisonment then became a question of penal servitude.

The yellow satyr whose fate I am now about to relate was a master mind in the business, whose actual punishment was farcical in comparison with the mischief he did.

In the year 1922, just about the time when the cocaine peril was at its height, a Chinaman named Bri¹ Chang kept a restaurant in Regent Street, London a stone's throw from Vine Street police station.

Full of subtle Orientalism was Chang. He spoke and wrote perfect English, and he had been in this country long enough to realise that there had been up during the war a craving for drugs which it would be exceedingly profitable to satisfy.

It must have been so, because within twelve months of opening the restaurant in Regent Street he had risen to the dignity of a flat in Park Lane, a Rolls-Royce car, and clothes befitting a newly-made millionaire.

Incredible—yet perfectly true. Chang, head and shoulders above the rest of his countrymen who kept opium “joints” in both East End and West End—there are innumerable devotees of the “pipe” in both places—turned up his flattened nose as far as he was able at the idea of supplying “hop” to mere yellow men. There were richer fields to farm in the world of Bohemia, peopled by satiated men and women to whom wine could bring no joy.

Chang’s masterly mind turned towards the possibility of the newest craze of the dissipated—cocaine. How, in defiance of the law, could he get it, and, having got it, dispose of it at a profit that would soon make him a rich man?

In a matter of twelve months he had brought into existence an organisation that effectively solved the question of supply. Frequent visits to Dockland, marked by much confidential discourse with the Chinese sailormen who frequent Limehouse and Wapping, enabled him to come to terms with accommodating yellow men who saw no harm, and quite a deal of money, in handling the cocaine that Chang arranged to be supplied from Hamburg and Antwerp.

There was another link in the chain, a lady of Celestial antecedents—on one side at any rate—who mixed opium-running with a little laundry work. She it was who boarded the steamers carrying baskets for dirty clothes, and came ashore with packets of cocaine securely hidden away between garments that smelt too noisome for a self-respecting Customs Officer to touch.

There was Low Li Foo and his assistant Ah
in years but old, very old, in wickedness.

In between times of looking for Scotland Yard men who might drop in at the Regent Street restaurant, they passed the packets of "dope" to Chang's clients and acted as "runners" when a consignment had to be brought up from the docks.

Chang himself never handled his infamous wares. To every pretty lady who asked for "dope" he would promise to send Low Li Foo or Ah Sing. Thus could he preserve his Oriental dignity and at the same time save himself from being captured by the police.

All might have gone well with Chang had he steered clear of the white women. But although he had a wife and family in his native China, he succumbed to the fascinations of pretty Freda Kempton and gave her the cocaine she swore she must have to still an aching heart.

"Billy," as all the girls called Chang, had a soft and impressionable heart, and he went on giving Freda "dope," until one day she was found dead, and there arose in consequence a flaming scandal which drove Chang out of the West End. Scotland Yard men nabbed four of his staff at Regent Street, and came into the place so often that his fly-by-night customers began to desert him. Chang retaliated by opening a night club in Soho, but still he got no peace. A lightning raid one night and a police court prosecution speedily terminated that little venture, and eventually Chang found himself in the only place where a yellow man can move about comparatively unnoticed—Limehouse.

A sad come-down indeed for the man who had lorded it for so long. Gone the Rolls-Royce, gone the Park Lane flat. There were insulting Chinese who spat upon him as he passed along the smelly, narrow streets, and rudely requested him not to frequent their premises. They had a good idea, these far-seeing men of the East, that wherever Brilliant Chang came trouble would very soon follow in his wake. Limehouse, after all, is only

a whispering gallery. There is but one common enemy—the police.

Nor did the news of Chang's arrival take long to spread. Within an uncomfortably short space of time C.I.D. officers called upon the distinguished visitor, asked him what he was doing for a living, and without asking permission went over his lodgings from top to bottom in search of "dope." They found none, because Chang had not definitely made up his mind what he wanted to do.

He found it very difficult to settle down in such a dreadful evil-smelling neighbourhood where every prospect was vile and his fellow-subjects displeasing in the extreme. By way of compromise he furnished some lodgings with a few of the more luxurious articles from his Park Lane flat, hoping the time might come when he could invite a few prepossessing ladies to a festive party enlivened by a little cocaine. Day by day, and night by night, he moodily wandered around, watched by prying eyes wherever he went, afraid to return to his old haunts for fear of something happening. He knew he was badly "wanted," but he had no intention of giving the police the slightest opportunity of putting him inside a cold prison cell. He had had fright enough over Freda Kempton's death; for the time being he would lie low, waiting till Scotland Yard had forgotten him.

Ah Ket, the keeper of a pak-a-pu joint in one of the back streets off the Causeway, and by common report a wealthy man, sat smoking a pipe of "hop" with Chang in the latter's sitting-room. The place reeked with the fumes of the opium, for every window was shut, and the two men spoke softly and guardedly in the native guttural. "Chan," said Ah Ket (he was calling his companion by his proper name of Chan Nam), "what is the matter

with you ? Six times at least have you allowed good parcels of cocaine to slip through your hands. Are you afraid ? ”

Chang looked at Ah Ket through half-closed eyes. He wore a black silk overall, such as the better-class Chinese affect, and Chinese slippers, though there was still an odd mixture of East and West in his appearance in that his pigtail, which no Chinaman parts with until he has said goodbye to his native land, had long since gone.

“ Who would not be afraid ? ” he replied slowly. “ They have not forgotten me, the police. It is nearly two years since poor Freda died, but I know they are waiting to catch me.”

“ Pah ! You are nothing but a weak fool. I did not think you would let such things trouble you. Besides, they cannot touch you now for that girl’s death. It was not your fault.”

“ What of Ah Sing and Low Li Foo ? ” demanded Chang with a touch of anger. “ What happened to them ? Detectives caught them a very short time after my poor little Freda died and got them sent to prison for six months. And where are they now ? They have been sent back to China many months ago. Twice have they written me asking for money, but I have not replied. I do not dare ; the letters may be opened by the police.”

Ah Ket laughed—long and deeply.

“ And I imagined you were a man with brains ! ” he exclaimed with biting contempt. “ You, the man they called the King of the Dope Trade ! Why, there are a dozen men in my shop who would do what I am asking you to do.”

“ I daresay there are,” said Chang, “ but they probably do not know they might be put into prison for three years if they get caught. You have not told them their faithful friend ? ”

Ah Ket took no notice of the taunt.

"There is some cocaine coming in from Hamburg in a few days," he remarked. "A good man is bringing it, the cook of the ship, who will have no trouble in getting it ashore. If you will take it to an address in London there will be fifty pounds in good English money for you. It will be easy for you to slip away from here one night; there will be a motor-car waiting round the corner, and you will be off with the stuff before the police have the slightest idea of what you are doing."

"I tell you no," said Chang, knocking out his pipe and rising. "I have no desire to serve many years in an English prison. Life is bad enough for me now without running any more risks."

If looks could have killed, Ah Ket would have murdered Chang where he stood. Instead, he bade his host good night, flip-flopped across the floor, and passed out into the murky night, leaving behind a restless, dissatisfied Chang.

Unable to sleep, hardly knowing what he wanted to do, Chang took off his Oriental slippers and put on a pair of ordinary boots. Then he donned an overcoat to hide his Chinese dress and followed Ah Ket out into the night. A few doors along the Causeway was a restaurant frequented by white women—dissipated and degraded creatures, it is true, but indisputably white. Chang's opulent years in the other end of London had inculcated passionate cravings for white women; he loathed the women of his own race, despised them for their lack of spirit, and lived only for the day when he might return to the life he loved so well.

He hated himself for going along to the restaurant. It was a low-down joint, patronised by drunken sailormen, white women of the streets, and imperturbable men of his own race, a queer conglomeration of black, white, and yellow. But one could get drink there at any hour of the night—raw, fiery whisky guaranteed to dope any

man's brains into senselessness. And that was what Chang wanted more than anything else ; he wanted to forget.

There was a girl he knew in the restaurant—Violet something or other. She, like most of the girls who went to the restaurant, had a history. In maudlin moments she had told him a little of it : a faithless husband who had taken ship for South America and never came back, a liaison with various seafaring men, lasting just as long as the money lasted, interspersed with wild drinking bouts, which made her an object of derision to all the people of Chinatown.

Chang was fond of her in a way. She mildly interested him, and, temporarily at least, kept his mind away from the ghosts of the past. He went in, to find her hilariously drinking herself into speechlessness, the centre of a group of men who looked at him in none too friendly fashion.

"Hullo, Billy!" she cried. "What's the matter with you to-night? You look as though you've just lost your grandmother. Have a drink and cheer up."

Chang sat down, took a drink that was brought across to him, and asked himself what had come over him that he, Chan Nam, an educated man, who wrote and spoke English as well as any Englishman, should be sitting in such a place, in the company of men of the stokehold, veritably the spawn of the gutters of Canton. What could be the matter with him?

He took up his glass of whisky and emptied it at a gulp. He was not used to spirits. In the old days champagne had been his drink. The strong spirit rushed to his head, giving him a recklessness he had not felt for many a day. The girl at his side noticed the change.

"Good old Billy!" she called out. "He's waking up at last! Let's have some more whisky. You do love me, don't you, Billy?"

One by one the sailormen slipped away. Chang and

the girl drank on ; through the mist that clouded his eyes Chang began to realise that she was rather pretty. The whisky mercifully hid the ravages of the past ; he glanced at her with his calculating eyes and wondered what it would be like to smother his bitter memories with a woman who got drunk every night.

If it came to that, what was he ? Not much better, surely. An outcast, just the same as the woman. And she liked him ; he might be able to break off the evil habits that made her associate with men who looked upon her as a mere light o' love.

Chang took the girl to live with him. She was not a very desirable companion for any man for quite a long time. The whisky had got hold of her ; when she couldn't get spirits she demanded cocaine, and Chang, more for the sake of peace than anything else, got her small packets of the drug to soothe her nerve-racked body.

There were times when she was bereft of her senses, and then Chang took the cocaine away from her. But her cunning brain soon found a way out of that difficulty. She used to hide an emergency ration of the "dope," so that when Chang had gone out, leaving her, as he thought, unable to get any cocaine, she could have a sniff on the quiet and reduce herself to hysterical helplessness by the time he returned.

The trouble was that sometimes she couldn't altogether remember where she had hidden the cocaine. She had odd hiding-places : behind the mantelpiece, under neath the furniture, in the bottom of vases and such-like ornaments. Occasionally Chang would come across her reserves and warn her that she was subjecting him to grave risks.

"You know what will happen," he told her, "if the police find cocaine here. I shall be sent to prison and also back to China. They will have no mercy on me."

The girl only laughed, but Chang shook his head and again warned her not to leave cocaine about.

Money began to run short. His friend Ah Ket, who had been noting the signs for a long time, had Chang into his private parlour late one night and again broached the subject of dope-running.

"You would like to earn a little money, Chang?" he inquired. "The woman is causing you a lot of expense?"

"Possibly," said Chang. "In any case I don't want to stop down here for ever. Some day I shall have to make a move."

"And what will you do about the woman? She will not be left behind."

"It will not be the first time," said Chang, with a shrug of the shoulders.

He left it at that while Ah Ket went on to describe the plans he had in mind for smuggling a big consignment of cocaine. It was a morbidly picturesque scheme, having for its centrepiece a midnight trip out into the middle of the river, where a man would be waiting at the bottom of a ship's ladder with the precious "dope." Then, after payment had been made, the boat would be rowed to the other side of the river, where Chang would find a car waiting to take him to an address in Soho. At a certain house in Greek Street he was to hand over the cocaine, and after receiving the money make his way back to Limehouse as best he could.

Chang, badly wanting money himself, succumbed. About once a week, armed with nothing but a roll of notes, he would be ferried out midstream, where he boarded strange ships and met mysterious men nervously anxious to be rid of their forbidden wares. The risks seemed negligible, and after a couple of months Chang began to feel a little more comfortable. He even made furtive visits to some of his old haunts in the West End, seeing here and there a familiar face. So far as he knew, the police had forgotten him altogether.

Somewhat foolishly, he began to neglect his lady-love. He gave her plenty of money out of his evilly earned income, it is true, and under compulsion also gave her cocaine. But he was away so often that she began to resume her drinking bouts. The café along the Causeway once more had reason to look upon her as a valuable customer. Night after night, in the company of the sailormen and the nondescript collection of men and women who frequented the place, she railed upon the miseries of a white woman's life in Chinatown.

She seemed to think Chang had used her badly, and occasionally, when the whisky had altogether got the better of her discretion, she would drop hints about the "dope" that was still being smuggled in. Nobody, apparently, took any heed of her talk.

And then there came the inevitable dénouement. One day when both Chang and his lady happened to be out a couple of Scotland Yard detectives took the liberty of calling. Probably they may have heard that Chang was up to his old games; at any rate, without waiting for permission, they began a minute search of the premises.

They did not find any of the cocaine which Chang was running for Ah Ket, but they did find odd little packets of the "dope" hidden away in all manner of strange places. They were still busily engaged, when who should walk in but Chang himself.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Chang, though he knew full well what his visitors were after.

"We are looking for 'dope,'" replied one of the detectives.

"You will find none here."

"Is that so? Then what is this?" holding up a screw of paper containing a gleaming white powder.

Yellow men do not turn white, even in a crisis, and besides, Chang had lived too long on the verge of prison

to show the fear that clutched his heart when he realised that the blow had fallen at last. But his Oriental calm never deserted him. No doubt, as he lay in gaol awaiting trial, he cursed the foolishness that had induced him to pander to a depraved woman's evil cravings, but if he did he showed no outward signs.

Possibly, also, he might have thought in his heart of hearts that there was a touch of poetic justice in the manner of his downfall, but here again he said nothing. He stood in the dock at the Old Bailey and took the sentence that the judge imposed upon him with his customary impassivity; wondered, probably, what it would be like to return to China after so many years in Europe; and then, after a glance round the Court through his gold-rimmed spectacles, walked slowly and dignifiedly down the steps to the cells.

THE MAN WHO MISSED HIS WAY

THE MAN WHO MISSED HIS WAY

IN a sphere of life more congenial than that in which an unkind Fate had cast him Lancashire Harry might have achieved quite a considerable amount of fame. He might, for instance, have donned the mantle of our old friend Charles Hawtrey, for it must be confessed that Lancashire Harry suffered from an incurable hankering for high-class bluff.

Nature had superimposed upon him kindly, plausible ways and a colourful vocabulary running into many thousands of words. In a country like the United States of America he would have achieved immortality as the Prince of Bunco-Steerers. Here, unfortunately, his opportunities were rather too limited. Besides, Harry had never received sufficient education to realise that the bigger the swindle the better the chance of getting away with it. But what an artist!

Harry had been many things—and none of them long—in the course of a diversified career calling for a smooth tongue and a confident manner. There was a publican in Salford who remembered him very well, a gentleman who grew quite heated when the subject of Lancashire Harry came up for discussion.

“Him!” ejaculated mine host. “Him! The dirty, low-down thieving hook! He comes into my place and says: ‘I’ve come to inspect the beer. We have been receiving complaints lately about the quality of the brew.’ The boss says he don’t want no one to be dissatisfied, he adds, and tells me he’ll be glad if I’ll take him down into the cellar to test it.

"I takes him down, and you'd 'a thought he was the King of England the way he takes a sup at every barrel in the place.

"He tells me some of it is 'off,' and says I had better send it back. We get quite chatty; he kindly informs me that I've got quite a nice little place and he'd like to have a look over it.

"I don't suspect him at first. I takes him round, shows him my private rooms, and never for a moment thinks there is anything wrong. He comes downstairs, has another drink, and then goes off saying he is quite satisfied with everything.

"I daresay he is. But when I gets upstairs again there's a different story to tell. I find he's not only knocked off all the wife's jewellery, but also taken about thirty-five quid in good hard ready. That's Lancashire Harry; if I had the swipe here I'd do something to him."

There were other episodes in Harry's life which had left him a poignant memory to people to whom he had appeared as a ship that passes in the night. Quite unexpectedly he rang the bell at a smart little house in Mayfair and informed the maid that he had come with reference to a ring which had been advertised as lost.

Gravely, dispassionately, and most authoritatively, Harry opened the proceedings:

"You have lost a ring, madam? What reward do you intend offering? I have been sent to inform you that you must not give more than five shillings in the pound."

Menacing, with visions of Scotland Yard and all the majesty of the law, Harry went on to say that "we"—doubtless he meant the Yard—always found it unwise to offer excessive rewards for the return of anything that was lost.

"Oh, the ring is only worth twenty pounds."

"That will be all right then," said Harry in his

best official manner. "Five pounds is a fair sum to pay to get your ring back. You see, madam, the ring has been found by a taxi-driver, and it only remains for the reward to be paid over to settle the matter at once. If you will give me the five pounds now," he added without a blush, "you will have your ring back to-night."

But the lady didn't get her ring back that night—or any other night. Inquiries in the proper quarter disclosed the uncomfortable fact that Scotland Yard didn't do business in that manner, but, alas, the culprit went on his way rejoicing, and as sedulously as ever scanned the advertisement columns of the newspapers for things that might be turned to advantage.

A bad lad was Lancashire Harry. Like most "tea-leaves" who acquire a nickname, he was a well-known, if not altogether welcome, inmate at many of our prisons. One of the numerous Governors who ventured to expostulate with him was told in light-hearted fashion that thieving was just as good a means of livelihood as anything else, and for two pins he, Harry, would come back and show the Governor that he could rob his place as easily as that of anybody else.

Harry was what might be called a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. He was not a high-class "screwsman," or even a pickpocket; the weapons he relied upon were cajolery and cunning. Besides, he had an ingenious mind, and he could see ways and means of getting money that no other man would dream of.

Industriously perusing his penn'orth of mental pabulum one morning on the look-out for an honest shilling or two, he read with interest the case of a Mrs. Florrie Davenport, whom an unkind magistrate had sent to prison for three months which Harry thought—and quite rightly—she would much prefer not to serve.

He knew his world pretty well, did Harry, and as he interestedly read that the aforesaid Mrs. Florrie

Davenport had appealed against her sentence, he made up his mind that here was the grand opportunity to test his powers as an actor to the full. It came about, therefore, that there was a knock at the door of the house in Offley Gardens, Brixton, where the fair Mrs. Davenport had her humble abode.

The lady answered the door herself, in full *déshabillé*, suspiciously resentful as all such ladies are when called upon by prying police officers before they have had time to array themselves in their full panoply of powder and paint.

"Well, what do you want?"—rudely, as one expecting a hard-hearted landlord.

"Ah, good morning," replied the visitor brightly raising his hat. "I've come to see you about that case of yours."

"And who the devil are you?"

"I am a detective-sergeant from Scotland Yard."

"Oh, you are, are you. Well," leading the way, "you'd better come inside. I don't want all the neighbours to see me talking on the doorstep to detectives."

"Now then," demanded the lady in the sanctity of her sitting-room, "what's your little game? I've appealed against the three months that the 'beak' gave me and I shall get off. If you've got anything to say about the matter, you'd better see my solicitor."

"My dear lady," said Harry, with one of his most affable smiles, "I don't want you to alarm yourself. There is nothing to get excited about. As a matter of fact," he went on confidentially, "we are in a bit of a mess about this case of yours. We never thought the magistrate would give you three months. Now, what would you say to paying a fine of fifty pounds instead of going to prison? That would suit you very much better, wouldn't it?"

"I daresay it would," retorted the lady rather tartly,

"but I don't quite understand your little game. I've had a pretty tidy experience of Scotland Yard, and this is the first time I have ever known them do anything like this. The dirty dogs wouldn't lift a hand to save a poor woman."

"Quite, quite," murmured Harry sympathetically. "I shouldn't tell you, of course, but we settle quite a lot of cases this way. Sometimes, you know, the magistrates are a bit more severe than we bargain for."

"How do I know you can get me out of doing this three months?"

"Leave it to me," said Harry. "I'll have to use a bit of influence, but if you like to pay your fine of fifty pounds I daresay it can be arranged."

"You go and see my solicitor," countered the lady. "I shan't do a thing without his advice."

"Who is he?"

"So-and-So of Bow Street."

"Cut him right out," warned Harry with a shake of the head. "He'll only cost you a lot of money. I know most of these fellows, and there's none of them any good."

A persistent lad was Harry, hard to shake off. Besides, he could see the lady was beginning to relent, and with visions of the fifty pounds coming his way shortly, he pulled out a notebook and began to jot down particulars of the case.

"I shan't do anything without my daughter," interjected the lady. "She knows as much about it as I do."

Quick to meet this attack was Harry.

"I had better see her privately," he announced. "I must know all the circumstances before I make my report to the Yard."

The arrival of Miss Davenport, full of Cockney cunning, didn't materially improve Harry's prospects. That damsel, pertly eyeing him as some unclean thing

that had drifted in through the basement, fully agreed that Ma ought not to go to gaol, but she couldn't exactly see a saviour in the somewhat unsavoury presence of the visitor. Furthermore, she told him so, and grew even more hostile when their caller graciously intimated that it would be possible for him to collect the fifty pounds fine then and there, and take it, together with his report, to Scotland Yard.

The two ladies conferred together and then notified Harry of their intention to abide by the solicitor. It was hard luck, and as Harry was reluctantly taking his departure he fired the last remaining shot in his locker—only a small one, it is true, but better than nothing.

"I've had a very good tip from the Yard about a horse running at Sandown to-day," he announced. "I've got a 'fiver' on it, and if you like you can have half my bet."

Little fish are sweet, especially when you can't catch the bigger ones. The lady didn't know that Scotland Yard added tipping to its innumerable activities, but, doubtless in recognition of the old truism that every workman is worthy of his hire, she handed over a "dollar," and sent Harry away on the understanding that she would meet him that night at a Kennington hostelry, where the matter of the fifty pounds fine would be further discussed.

Harry must have had plenty of confidence in his powers over the fair sex. He turned up at eight o'clock that night to find the two ladies awaiting him. The one with the three months hanging over her head gave him warm greeting, asked him what he would have, and certainly gave no hint that there was to be a second act to the comedy of the morning. The two chatted together in amiable fashion, despatched their drinks to the appointed destination, while Harry impatiently waited for news of the £ s. d. The daughter temporarily disappeared.

It was Mamma in whom Harry was most interested, so perhaps he could be excused for not being so alert as usual when a few minutes later the daughter reappeared in company of a couple of hefty-looking individuals who seemed to know Mrs. Davenport quite well.

"Good evening, Mrs. Davenport," said one of the men with a broad smile. "Won't you introduce me to your friend?"—indicating Harry standing modestly by.

"I am so sorry," replied the lady. "I'm a terrible one for manners. This," nodding to Harry, "is Detective-Sergeant Allen of Scotland Yard."

"What!" exclaimed the two newcomers in astonishment. "Not the famous Detective-Sergeant Allen from Scotland Yard?"

"Yes, that's me," replied Harry with praiseworthy simplicity.

"We're very pleased to meet you. How long have you been at Scotland Yard?"

"Oh, about ten years."

"Good gracious! How strange we have never met you before!"

With a nasty feeling in his inside that something had gone wrong, Harry stared blankly at his interrogators.

"Met me?" he managed to jerk out.

"Yes, you. Don't you know us?"

Harry had a pretty shrewd idea in his head that if he hadn't known them before, he would in all likelihood know them in the future. It was certainly rather awkward to be asked to produce his police card. He fumbled in his pockets long and earnestly, took a look at the door to see if he might successfully make a bolt, and after abandoning that wild idea regretted he must have left his card at home.

Matters were getting rather strained when suddenly an interlude in the shape of a small boy arrived upon the scene. He wasn't a very clean-looking youth, but

he had in his possession a long buff envelope which he announced as being for "Detective-Sergeant Allen."

Harry miserably took it and tried to put it in his pocket. But one of the other men unceremoniously pulled it away from him, opened it, and at once registered interest in the contents. One would have thought, to judge by what he found written there, that Detective-Sergeant Allen was quite an important person in the Criminal Investigation Department. Briefly, they were orders which in regular ship-shape official fashion instructed "Detective-Sergeant Allen" to proceed any time after noon on Sunday to Ramsgate, there to take into custody some unfortunate individual accused of larceny, and to hand over the same to the Superintendent of the Kennington Road police station. When that had been done he was to report to Scotland Yard.

Evidently Harry's superiors liked to keep him busy. After he had done with the Ramsgate job he had to proceed forthwith to Birmingham and bring back a lady who, like Harry himself, possessed a too plausible tongue. Then he was to go to Vine Street to take instructions re the Davenport case.

"Having read your statement over," the instructions continued, "the Yard thinks that a re-trial should take place. You are to inform the said Davenport that she is to appear at the Lambeth Police Court at 10.30 in the forenoon and bring with her her daughter and any other witness she may require. The Chief has studied your report, and also Mrs. Davenport's statement, and on the face of it he thinks that a re-trial will be granted and the case 'squashed.'"

Harry does not seem to have been as well up in legal terminology as he might have been. "Squashed" was a very bad break, even if the two men to whom he had just been introduced had not notified him that they were going to take him into custody on charges of trying to

obtain fifty pounds by false pretences, and also for impersonating a police officer.

"All right," said Harry resignedly; "it's a fair cop. I'll go quiet."

So, the centre of quite an interested little group, he made his exit from the stage as represented by the brightly-lit saloon bar of a London "pub," and from there to a seat in the dock at the London Sessions, where an unsympathetic judge bitingly pointed out that he would be much better off in a place where his talents for trickery would receive the discouragement they deserved.

THE GRAND DUCHESS'S PEARLS

THE GRAND DUCHESS'S PEARLS

WHEN His Imperial Majesty the Tsar Nicolai II dramatically abdicated the throne of Russia in the year 1917, and thus put an end to the Romanoff dynasty, it is highly probable that Mr. Maurice Sternbach, international thief and smooth-tongued swindler, had no idea that such an epoch-making event would bring *him* tumbling down to the depths from which he had risen by the exercise of his undoubtedly agile wits.

Morris—the Maurice was a perversion of his own, much more suitable to the society in which he got his living—had, it is true, been a subject of the Russian Emperor; probably not a very loyal one, as subsequent events were to prove. For the immediate present, however, he was not thinking of Russia. Other and more pressing problems were confronting him.

He was in Bow Street police station, angrily facing a burly Divisional Detective-Inspector, plus two or three more officers. Morris, much too fashionably attired for such drab surroundings, was holding forth :

"Stealing hair-brushes ! Do you think I am mad ? "

"Not at all," said the D.D.I. "You are charged with being in possession of certain property belonging to a lady staying at the Cecil. The inference is that you have stolen it."

"But hair-brushes ! Me !"—with a violent shrug of the shoulders and an expressive display of hands. "Me ! Why, anyone would think I was a cheap guy who got his living double-crossing women-folk."

"You know best," replied the D.D.I. "I am not

going to argue the matter with you now. You will come up before the magistrate in the morning, and you can tell him whatever tale you like."

"It's an outrage!" spluttered Morris, his suavity beginning to desert him. "I'll have the American Ambassador——"

He got no further. Strong hands escorted him down a corridor and locked him inside a cell, where he spent a most unpleasant night ruminating on what would happen when the morrow came.

Mr. Sternbach had the misfortune to possess a "history," and he certainly should have known better than to have involved himself in such a contemptible peccadillo. He had served a very lengthy apprenticeship through the various degrees of roguery. From a Bowery pickpocket he had become a hotel thief, then an expert jewel robber, and finally—this after acquiring a little capital—an accomplished tale-teller.

It took time, of course, but Morris, nothing if not adaptable, gradually took on the veneer of a gentleman and sedulously sought the society of his betters. He knew all the swell hotels of New York, Palm Beach, San Francisco, Paris and London, and being a careful man who usually paid his bills his reputation was good enough to make him a welcome guest wherever he went. Morris's game was a high-class one; he liked to pose as a wealthy man of affairs, and in that capacity to induce confiding acquaintances to give him their money to invest.

But there had been a little trouble in New York, brought about by Morris bilking a confederate. The Detective Department came on the scene only to find the bird flown. Morris had gone to gay Paree, confident that whatever happened he would find plenty of rich Americans with money to burn.

He became Maurice Sternbach, Esq., banker, of New York City, with a house on Fifth Avenue and another on the Hudson. So well did he play his part, that he succeeded in persuading a confiding American lady, who happened to be staying at the Ritz-Carlton at the same time, to hand him £4,000 of her money to be invested in certain stocks and shares which were on the boom.

Some little unpleasantness arose, the upshot of the matter being that Morris thought it better to cross the Straits of Dover away from the attentions of the Sûreté. He arrived in London—no strange city to him—ensconced himself at the most expensive hotel he could find, and then sat down to think out a few more get-rich-quick schemes.

One must confess that there was nothing crude about Morris. Plausibility was his long suit ; he would stand you the finest dinner that money could buy, with champagne *ad lib.*, the best of Corona Coronas, while all the time his beady black eyes shrewdly sized you up for what you were worth—to him. The sweetness of little fish made no appeal to him ; so many years had passed since he had picked " pokes " on Broadway that he had forgotten all about the art. It was one of his axioms, revealed only to his most intimate friends, not to " fall " unless it was worth while.

In pursuance of his plans, therefore, he was careful to mix in nothing but the best society, which accounts for the fact that he succeeded in making the acquaintance of an unsuspecting Russian Prince, acting as Comptroller to Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna of Russia, the sister of no less a person than the murdered Tsar. The Grand Duchess had, like so many of her unfortunate people, fled from her native land and taken refuge in England. Except for some thousands of pounds worth of jewellery she had been able to bring away, she had next to nothing of her vast fortune left.

The direful plight of Her Royal Highness did not seriously perturb Mr. Sternbach. Although born of Russian parents, he felt not the slightest loyalty towards anything Russian; the only question that exercised his mind was how he might induce the Grand Duchess to hand over her jewellery to him.

It took long months of careful scheming, and the expenditure of quite a considerable sum of money, to establish that confidence which would enable him to assume the position of financial adviser to the Grand Duchess. She was not, of course, a lady who had had any previous experience of smooth-tongued swindlers like Morris Sternbach, and she did not for one moment dream that such an elegantly-mannered gentleman, who spoke so softly and sympathised so warmly with her, could be anything but what he appeared—an international financier handling millions of pounds.

As she came to know him better, Her Royal Highness told him how she was situated, that her resources consisted of nothing but jewellery which would have to be sold.

"I am deeply sorry for your Royal Highness," said Morris in his most courtly fashion. "If there is anything I can do for you I shall be highly honoured."

That was the beginning of a plundering which made him secretly smile with satisfaction. The Grand Duchess gave him jewellery which he sold for £1,000 on the understanding that the money would be invested in one of his companies. It probably was, although the Grand Duchess never saw a penny of it.

The months went on and still Mr. Sternbach retained the Royal favour. It was necessary, naturally, to find a plausible pretext for inveigling more money out of the Grand Duchess, and so Mr. Sternbach took into his confidence another equally specious scoundrel who ran a City office under a name calculated to produce a vast

impression on credulous minds. Between the pair of them a pretty scheme was concocted to relieve the Grand Duchess of everything she possessed.

About the end of 1921, Sternbach called on Her Royal Highness and told her that he had the opportunity of purchasing the rights of a new photographic process which would make millions of pounds. £20,000 would be required, and if she could find that money he could assure her, on his word of honour, that she would become rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Had the Grand Duchess taken the precaution to consult a reputable solicitor, she would have discovered that Mr. Sternbach's allegedly wealthy City friend was nothing more than a notorious swindling company promoter, a gentleman with a long record of rascality in many similar ventures. But, as has already been stated, she knew nothing about the sharks of big cities. All her life she had moved in the seclusion of Royal households, in countries where specious thieves are kept in their proper place.

So, in the beginning, Mr. Sternbach succeeded in persuading the Grand Duchess to hand him a pearl necklace worth £10,000, the understanding being that he sold it and invested the money in the new photographic process. Mr. Sternbach told glowing stories of the prices he could get for high-class jewels, particularly those belonging to Royalty.

"I've got some millionaire friends in New York," he remarked, "who'll pay any price for the right stuff. You leave it to me."

To be quite accurate, he promptly pawned the Grand Duchess's necklace for £4,000, cut up the money with the shark in league with him, and then carried on, convinced that he had but scratched the surface of a wonderful goldmine.

So well did he do his work that three weeks later

another pearl necklace was handed over to him, and promptly "popped" for the useful sum of £5,000. According to Mr. Sternbach, who certainly ought to have known, £3,000 of that sum went into the photographic company, although it was a moot point how long it remained there.

The two *chevaliers d'industrie* were not altogether inconsiderate; they gave the Grand Duchess a document in which it was grandiloquently set forth that she was to get half-share of the profits, though to be sure she was not to know there could be no profits, because there was no photographic process and no company to make them. Mr. Sternbach, with the audacity of long years of bunco-steering in New York, during which time he had often sold Brooklyn Bridge and the Grand Central Station to newly-arrived Poles and such-like people, thought it quite unnecessary to go to the trouble of providing any tangible signs of profit-making beyond a City office and a long-winded agreement.

Still another pearl necklace fell into the hands of the swindling couple, this also being deposited with "uncle" to the tune of £5,000. That, apparently, did not go into the "company."

The Grand Duchess began to grow a trifle uneasy, particularly when she looked at Mr. Sternbach's seal on the profit-sharing agreement which was to make her rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Strangely enough, the seal bore a striking resemblance to a coin of His Majesty King George V, and whatever Mr. Sternbach may have been, he certainly had no authority to use the Royal Arms of England on legal documents.

Investigations at the hotel he patronised disclosed that he had gone to Paris, and there the Grand Duchess wrote demanding to know what was happening to her money. She received a reply, which speaks for itself:

C— (the fellow-shark) has gone to Hamburg (more likely he had gone to Halifax) to see some experts, but business is going on as well as even I could expect. I solemnly believe, before your God or mine, that before a week the deal will be closed, and no less than £50,000 will be handed over to me in Paris.

As to the balance, I think I had better wait till you are better, as even a Grand Duchess might get excited if I mentioned the sum of 3,750,000 dollars, not to mention 50 per cent. on all royalties.

You are one of the best women in the world to place your trust in a Jew . . . God bless you for placing me in a position where I can serve you, and I offer you all my loyalty ; your servant, to come at your call at any time till death do us part.

I am sending you a piece of marble from the altar of the church at Albert which was given me by the priest. On this piece of holy stone I vow to protect and help you if you ever need it.

Mr. Sternbach continued to write equally soothing letters, but he never sent any money. Something was always intervening to prevent the photographic process being sold for a fabulous fortune. Influential Russian princes, calling upon Mr. Sternbach at various places in Paris, left him on the understanding that profits would be available in a very short space of time, little heeding that the Grand Duchess's money had already gone beyond reparation.

Then came a terrible shock for the Grand Duchess. She received a letter from him, written not from the Ritz-Carlton, but from a Paris prison ! It seemed incredible, but there it was. Mr. Sternbach, as plausible as ever, wrote to say that owing to a slight misunderstanding over a matter of £400 a hot-headed American friend had accused him of fraud and put him in gaol. Would Her Royal Highness be good enough to send him the trifling sum in question so that the matter might be settled ?

But Her Royal Highness would do nothing of the sort. It had gradually dawned upon her that she had fallen among thieves, and the only thing that worried her was not getting Mr. Sternbach out of gaol, but getting her money back.

Apparently, however, friend C—— came to the rescue, because a few months later Sternbach turned up in London again, and with an audacity typical of his nature took rooms at one of the best hotels in the Strand. What he had done with the Grand Duchess's money was a mystery he alone could have solved. Certain it is that he returned to London practically penniless, and the only assumption an intelligent person could come to was that "The Man Higher Up," otherwise C——, had emulated Mr. A. L. Fredericks of O. Henry fame and diddled a fellow-worker.

Possibly, also, Mr. Sternbach underwent an attack of atavism. He so far forgot himself as to revert to the petty thieving tricks of forty years before. A set of gold-mounted hair-brushes which accidentally revealed themselves as he passed by a lady's bedroom at his Strand Hotel looked so easy that he slipped in and purloined them.

He shouldn't have done such a thing because, unknown to him, there were detectives watching him all over London. But he was getting desperate, wondering day by day whether he was going to be prosecuted for defrauding the Grand Duchess. If he had possessed the necessary £ s. d. he would have cleared off to America, though he had a pretty shrewd idea that there would be detectives waiting for him wherever he embarked.

Not an enviable state of mind for a man who had so long mixed with wealth and rank. He thought of his first taste of prison in New York when he had got a month for taking a lady's purse, and he wondered if the English gaols were any more uncomfortable than those of America.

It was so long since he had been "inside" that he had practically forgotten all about it.

.

And that was the position when a couple of hefty individuals who introduced themselves as detective officers called upon Morris and invited him to come up the Strand, and turn left past the Lyceum to a well-known place embellished by a blue lamp. Morris protested, as might be expected, but he accepted the situation with his customary dignity.

That self-possession did not desert him when he was ushered into the police court dock the following morning, and although the magistrate declined to accept the explanation he offered, he announced that he would not serve the sentence of three months' imprisonment passed upon him without appealing to a higher authority. He strongly resented being described as an international adventurer. Unfortunate in his speculations he may have been.

When he went across the river to a place that is known as the Sessions House his dignified bearing seems to have created quite a favourable impression upon the Bench who heard his appeal. But although Morris succeeded in getting his sentence reduced to the nominal one of seven days, the Bench apparently concluded that such plausible individuals would be better off in the land to which they belonged. Possibly the powers that be had some inkling of the mischief Morris had already done. They decreed that he should be deported, even if he did leave behind him a good many people who thought that seven years' penal servitude would have been a much more suitable punishment for a cruel, designing old man.

FIRE ! FIRE ! FIRE !

FIRE ! FIRE ! FIRE !

If you had asked Mr. Joseph Englestein what he liked more than anything else in the world he would probably have replied : " Vell, vat's der matter mit money ? "

You couldn't very well blame him, because he had left his native Poland twenty years previously determined to make money by hook or by crook. Hospitable old England offered as good an opportunity as any other land, so to England he came, unable to speak a word of the language. That, however, caused him little or no inconvenience. The neighbourhood in which he took up his residence spoke Yiddish in preference to British.

Time travelled on with Joseph angrily slaving away his life at his trade of cabinet-maker. He was an ambitious man, this Joseph Englestein, square of chin and determined of mouth, plus a pair of hard, deep-set eyes that warned you plainer than words he was not a man to be trifled with.

He worked as only the Jews can work, sixteen hours a day, laboriously scraping every penny he could lay hands on. He became the owner of a tiny factory in a back street of unsavoury Shoreditch, slaved away at the making of cheap furniture, and generally lived a hand to mouth existence, selling his goods for cash to the factors who traded upon their knowledge of a man being practically penniless. Joseph knew it, of course, and it merely increased the bitterness he felt towards the world in general.

When the Great War came to an end in 1918 things began to look up. There was money to burn and the

ghettos of the East End sounded with rejoicing. The furniture trade was booming; what had once been desolation and death suddenly burst forth into wild, hilarious life.

Joseph, being a clever man, more than had his share of the wealth that came pouring into the highways and byways of Shoreditch, and on the strength of his newly-found prosperity, being a man rather fond of the fleshpots, he launched out into a pretentious domestic establishment, where his by now numerous brood of young Englesteins could forget the struggling days of times gone by.

It would seem that Joseph harboured social ambitions, because he took up his residence in no less a place than a castle, one that had been inhabited by a lady of title in the days when Hackney was a good deal more fashionable neighbourhood than it is now. It certainly tickled Joseph's fancy vastly to find himself living in such a place; he thought he could not do better than insist upon all his family dressing for dinner every night, with half a dozen servants to wait upon them.

Old friends went by the board and great was the resentment thereby. Guttural gentlemen whose English deserted them in moments of stress told each other over the coffee and dominoes of a morning that it couldn't possibly last.

"He is a *schlimil*," they muttered. "It vill not be long before der police gome for him."

On the other hand, there were conflicting opinions, it being thought that Joseph was the real *kleiger kop*—which was probably true up to a point.

As clever as he undoubtedly was, Joseph had no power to avert the terrible slump that set in when the easily-earned money of the war began to find its way back to the source from whence it came. The furniture he had been manufacturing at fabulous profits lay in his warehouse unsold, and as the months went on, with

no sign of improvement, it began to dawn on Joseph that he had bitten off a little more than he could chew by ensconcing himself in a mansion where he lived at the rate of £10,000 a year.

He was a proud man, and it galled him beyond all endurance when he thought of the sneers of the one-time friends he now passed by. He used to lay awake of a night in his sumptuously-appointed bedroom hearing them say : " Vot a *schlimil* ! " or, in plain English, what a poor, silly fool.

He didn't mean to stand that, so, being a man of infinite resource, he set his agile brain to work. Money had to be raised quickly ; the only way he could think of was a fire. He had already staged a burglary which had brought in a couple of thousand pounds ; it wouldn't do to have another one so soon. That particular little affair had caused a certain amount of unpleasantness ; on the evidence of a door smashed open by a jemmy and rooms turned upside down the insurance company paid up, if privately they knew they had been swindled.

Old acquaintances in plenty were in similar desperate plight. Joseph went round to see a crony of his early years in England, one Julius Brust. They had worked at the same bench together for a long time and there were no secrets between them, but whereas Joseph had successfully climbed the social ladder and wanted to continue climbing, his friend Brust was content to remain what he had always been—a humble man of the people. They had this bond in common : both of them were in what the English call Queer Street.

They went into a committee of ways and means, and as no one else was present to take minutes of the meeting their conversation must remain unrecorded. One may, however, make a pretty accurate guess as to the result of their deliberations, because shortly afterwards a cry of " Fire ! " resounded along the street where Joseph

had his cabinet works. The London Fire Brigade came tearing up at full speed, courageously penetrated the swirling smoke that poured out of doors and windows, and drenched everything and everybody with huge streams of water.

There was the usual "inquest," and no doubt a good many people had their suspicions that Joseph was not telling the truth when he told a tale of smouldering cigarettes and careless workmen. Still, the insurance company had to pay, and Joseph put the £1,200 in his pocket with the feeling he was still far from being out of trouble.

He began to have strange visitors in his castle, rough, uncouth-looking fellows sadly at variance with the tone of the establishment. The family expostulated; lengthily and shrilly they objected to making the acquaintance of men whose habits were those of the *chazar*.

"Mind your own damn pusiness!" replied father angrily. "Am I not der head of dis house?"

"Yes, but why do we have such people like that Brust here?"

"Dat is noddings to do mit you."

It was certainly all very mysterious. Night after night the uncouth Mr. Brust and a few more equally disreputable-looking friends called at the castle, to be admitted into Joseph's private sanctum. There were conferences lasting right into the middle of the night long after the family had gone to bed.

Then, strange to relate, Mr. Brust had a fire, a better one than Joseph's. It brought in £2,000, and, thus inspired, Joseph thought about going into the business properly. He did not bother about floating a company for the purpose, nor did he even advertise his new profession. If he had, no doubt he would have intimated to the world something like this:

FIRES SUPPLIED ON THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE NOTICE.

Insurance Companies taken in and done for.

Being a modest man, he was content to let the work bring its own reward. After a third effort, which realised £5,000, he concluded it was time to set about the business in earnest. Brust, who had always maintained close connections with his working brethren, became a sort of traveller to the newly-constituted firm of Englestein and Company. His customers he found among the people who had no money. There were plenty of them just then, and one must admit they lent a ready ear to the persuasive tongue of Mr. Julius Brust.

"Der best thing you can do is to have a fire. I know a fellow dat can do the business properly."

Doubts would arise, of course, but Julius could calm them all. The "fellow" he knew was a reasonable man, who not only did his work efficiently, but also did not mind waiting for his money until the insurance company settled up. He would even take a bill, so trusting was he.

The orders quickly began to flow in, and Joseph soon had his hands full. But he was careful; having a fairly good idea in his head what it would mean once the police got him, he personally supervised all the arrangements. Should the insurance policy be a little too recent, or if the prospective client had had a fire some little time previously, then Joseph wanted nothing to do with the matter. Or it may have been that his customer hadn't sufficient furniture in his place to make a decent fire. That difficulty Joseph overcame by moving in a few "props" of his own which, as time went on, began to wear a badly battered and burnt appearance. No doubt it was also a most excellent method of overcoming this slump in the furniture trade, though to be sure unkind insurance assessors began to complain of paying fancy prices for firewood.

Like all great schemes, this fire-bug business was simplicity itself. Joseph and Julius would be admitted

into a factory just before it closed at night and secrete themselves until all the men had gone. A couple of hours would be passed in smoking and chatting and then the two men would get to work. Furniture would be piled near the staircases so that it would catch the full force of the draught. Piles of shavings on the ground floor, a pint of petrol, a match, a quick exit, and the job was done. The rabbit warrens at the back supplied all the secrecy that was necessary. Long after Joseph and Julius had vanished into the obscurity of the night the alarm would be raised, and the fire brigade once more come pelting down with brass-helmeted crews bent on undoing all the good work Joseph and his friend had just done.

Quite a number of people objected to this new and flourishing industry ; the inhabitants in the immediate neighbourhood because they didn't think it conducive to their safety, the insurance companies because they objected to paying out many thousands of pounds when they knew, even if they could not prove, that fire-raisers were responsible. The decent people in the trade also had a few unkind words to say owing to the fact that they were compelled to pay double and treble rates to insure *their* premises. And last, but not least, Scotland Yard began to evince a certain amount of dislike to the individuals who kept the London Fire Brigade so busily employed.

It was notified to Mr. Englestein more than once that he had better go out of the game before it was too late, but by that time he was making so much money that he couldn't seriously entertain the idea. Besides, his methods had improved ; instead of petrol he now used thermite, showing that he, at any rate, had learned a lesson from the Germans in the gentle art of burning. And as there were still plenty of people whose businesses were in a bad way his representative, Mr. Brust, continued to find no difficulty in obtaining customers. Cabinet-makers living on the verge of bankruptcy blazed their way back to prosperity

by the aid of Mr. Englestein's fires until such time as the word went forth that something would have to be done.

.

One fine day Joseph made the acquaintance of an individual whose countenance bore out the contention of the person who introduced him that he had come from somewhere in Poland. The new arrival was a furniture dealer from Newcastle—so he said—and he took such a fancy to Joseph that he began to tell him all his troubles.

"Business is terrible—terrible!" he remarked with tears in his eyes. "I don't know vot I am going to do."

Joseph did. "Vot's the matter with a good fire?" he inquired as though he didn't mean it.

"Fire?"

"Yes," said Joseph. "I know a man around dese parts who is pretty good at dem."

One thing led to another, and when the pair parted it was on the understanding that in return for the sum of £1,000 there should be a fire at Newcastle, the money to be paid over on Joseph's usual terms. For the time being, then, Joseph went on his way rejoicing, busily attending to the numerous orders being booked. Occasionally some of his customers, doubtless pinpricked by inconsiderate bank managers, used to call at the castle demanding to know when they could expect delivery of their fire. To be sure, Joseph always received them quite civilly, as befitted a man of business acumen.

"Let me see," he would tell them, pulling out his diary. "Your fire is on der 12th. I daresay I'll be able to let you have it by den."

To all outward appearances, everything was going along quite smoothly. The fires blazed up and smouldered

STRANGE COMPANY

with reassuring regularity. Insurance companies refused to pay up, while Joseph became more arrogant ever. Now and then little mishaps came his way, of his fires in Columbia Road, Shoreditch, where he used petrol instead of his usual thermite, resulted getting very badly burned about the arms. It was so, indeed, that he felt compelled to absent himself his usual haunts.

However, he was soon back at work. There came later one afternoon anxious to know when he might get his overdue fire. Joseph fixed the date and then casually invited the client to have a drink.

"Vot vill you take?" he inquired. "Visky-and-yes?"

"That will do."

Joseph stretched out his arm to reach the whisky. The client noticed that it was bandaged.

"What's the matter with your arm?" he inquired.

"Noddings. I had a little accident mit der geyser bathroom. Goot health!"

Joseph didn't know, of course, that for some time Scotland Yard had been looking for a man suffering from burns, nor was he aware of the fact that he had already been identified as the man seen running away from the factory in Columbia Road on the night of the fire. Truly, familiarity breeds contempt; he had so completely confounded the myrmidons of the law that it hardly occurred upon him the time might come when he would be compelled to exchange his comfortable castle for a prison cell. No suspicion, certainly, filled his mind on that particular afternoon. He bade his caller goodbye, and fully promised him that he should have his fire without the slightest delay, and then sat down to go through his accounts.

He heard the front door bell ring again. A maid came in to inform him that there were three gentlemen

anxious to see him. Three ! A sudden spasm of fear gripped his guilty conscience. For a second he looked at the window wondering whether to disappear through it.

"Pah !" he said to himself. "It may be noddings."

"Who are dey ?" he asked the maid sharply. "Are dey people I know ?"

The girl had no time to answer him, for suddenly three men walked in uninvited.

"We want to talk to you about a fire in Columbia Road," said one of them.

"Vot do I know about it ?"

"Quite a lot."

"Don't let's talk about fires," urged Joseph. "I'm sick and tired about hearing of dem. Noddings but fire, fire, fire. I don't know vot der pusiness is coming to. It's terrible, ain't it ?"

"You bet it is. We thought you might be able to tell us something about them."

"Not me," said Joseph, rattling the money in his pockets. "Vot do you want to bother about fires for ? Have a drink instead, dere's goot boys."

"We won't bother about the drink just now ; you've got to come along with us."

"Vell, and who are you ? Ain't you der fellow vot has der blace at Newcastle ? Ain't you der fellow vot was going to have der fire ?"

"I was, but I've changed my mind."

Joseph made the best of a bad job. After the preliminary consternation had died down he sent emissaries to all his old clients, suggesting the advisability of a generous subscription towards his defence, so that when the time came for him to stand in the dock at the Old Bailey he could be represented by one of the finest legal brains in England. However, money could not save him on this occasion. He took his punishment as one who had received a death blow, and in fact the six years' penal

servitude awarded him did indeed prove the end of all things. Perhaps it was just as well, because the law had ordained that after he had completed his term he should be sent back to his native land, and that, to him, would have been the greatest punishment of all.

BUNTY PULLS HER LAST STRING

BUNTY PULLS HER LAST STRING

HIDDEN away in the C.R.O. at Scotland Yard, which for the benefit of the uninitiated is the department where they keep the records of all the unfortunate beings who have fallen foul of the law, you will find many a strange little romance, most of them, it is true, savouring of the pitiful.

They haven't got much time for romance at the "Yard"; in passing, as it were, the matter-of-fact official may wonder what has become of someone whose peccadilloes have set wagging the tongues of scandal. But that is probably as far as it gets; the "file" which contains the law's record of that particular individual is tied up with its red tape and consigned to dust and ultimately destruction.

No one at the "Yard" has yet succeeded in solving the secret of Mrs. "Bunty" Maclaren. There may be one or two people in this world who know it, but they are not to be found at that great rambling place on the Embankment. "Bunty" had been pulling the strings for many years until the time came for her to vanish from the stage for good. And when she made her exit it was indeed a dramatic one. Had she been conversant with her Dickens, she might have said, as she disappeared from the world she had known: "'Tis a far, far better thing I do now than I have ever done."

Mystery was the keynote of "Bunty's" life. She had been born with a mysterious kink; instead of being content with the comparatively humble station of life in which her parents moved, she must needs embark on the perilous trade of thief. Possibly she preferred the

likelihood of gaol to the dull drudgery of domestic service ; certain it is that as far back as 1901, when she was only 17 years of age, Scotland Yard came to hear of her as a servant girl who had stolen her mistress's jewellery.

The law was merciful to women then, as it is now. "Bunty" wept pitifully, and a compassionate magistrate bound her over to come up for judgment if called upon. However, for five years she seems to have behaved herself ; not until 1906 did she fall foul of the law again. Then Scotland Yard had her through their hands once more for robbing women of their jewellery, and again she was bound over.

This time, apparently, it was misplaced leniency, for in the following year she made quite a nice little haul from a big country house where she had been employed. With two previous convictions behind her, she had to go for trial and subsequently to prison, for, as the judge who dealt with her said, she seemed little better than an incorrigible thief. "Bunty" still wept bitter tears, but they did not avail her this time.

When she came out of gaol she turned society adventurer. It had probably dawned upon her, as it had done upon many other people with a taste for wrong-doing, that she might just as well be hanged for the sheep as the proverbial lamb ; and being a good-looking young lady with a plausible tongue, she found it comparatively a simple matter to call herself the Hon. Mrs. So-and-So, and to put up at an expensive hotel where, for a time at least, she could run up enormous bills, bilk all the tradesmen in the neighbourhood for luxurious clothing and jewellery, and then, when the game became too warm, quietly disappear.

So it went on until 1910. She moved about the country surrounded by mystery, leaving behind her wherever she went a trail of shopkeepers and hotel-keepers to wonder what had become of her. There were occasional

men in her life who no doubt found her extremely fascinating if rather expensive. Credulous old ladies also deemed her to be a most charming woman, whose expectations of wealth to come induced them to part with tidy little sums of money which, alas ! were never repaid. "Bunty" was always pulling the strings with one tale or another ; she possessed an imagination so fertile that Baron Munchausen himself might have envied her originality.

But, sad to say, there came a shocking misfortune. While living in the Isle of Wight, in a furnished house where she entertained many prominent people, she became so short of money that she was reduced to stealing jewellery from the club premises of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes. A misguided male friend had taken her in to this most exclusive of society haunts, and "Bunty" had utilised the opportunity to feather her own nest.

One or two of the club's servants, who had always been rather suspicious of her, saw her frequenting the ladies' dressing-rooms for no apparent reason ; and when, later, complaints were received that jewellery was missing "Bunty" was interrogated by the police and subsequently placed under arrest. That, no doubt, was a terrible shock to her, as it was to her aristocratic acquaintances. Tearfully did she plead that she had no need to steal. However, her victims were adamant, and in due course the good-looking "Bunty" had to appear at Quarter Sessions. Being a consummate actress, she again managed to produce a flow of tears, but they did not avail her in the least. She had to go to prison for twelve months, where, it is interesting to learn, she distinguished herself by "making eyes" at both the Governor and the Chaplain.

It seems, however, that the thrill of adventure was in her blood. When she came out of gaol she soon resumed her old tricks, and there were complaints all over

the country, mostly from people living in hotels and boarding-houses, of money and jewellery which disappeared much about the same time as the fair "Bunty."

She was certainly clever with it; with a dozen different aliases she moved from one place to another, striking up casual friendships which got her to the point of being invited to other women's rooms, to which, shortly afterwards, she would pay another and more profitable visit.

Then began the crowning triumph of her life. The war came, and "Bunty" promptly turned herself into a Sister of Charity. It was no time for scrutinising the credentials of anyone who proffered assistance, and as "Bunty" had the grand manner she easily pushed her way into the company of people who were only too glad to have the help of such a charming person. She even found a husband in an unsuspecting young officer, married him without any unnecessary waste of time, and for a while at least congratulated herself on having steered herself into a safe anchorage.

But the old hankering for a thrill still remained within her. Besides, she was inordinately vain; she had a passion for clothes and jewels impossible for anyone but a millionaire to satisfy. There were innumerable rifts in her matrimonial life due to this little failing of hers, the upshot of the matter being that "Bunty" went off on her own again, playing the game she knew so well. She was heard of at Folkestone, Eastbourne and Bournemouth, always to the same effect. People, led away by her charming manners and apparent friendliness, took her under their wings, until one fine day "Bunty" disappeared and left behind her sorrow and suspicion.

It couldn't go on for ever, of course. One morning in September, 1923, "Bunty" walked into a Bournemouth draper's shop. She clapped eyes on a bulging silver bag at the side of a lady buying a pair of shoes;

in the twinkling of an eye the bag had disappeared and so had "Bunty."

But she seems to have been rather careless this time, or maybe it was that she couldn't resist the temptation to spend the money she had stolen. As some of it was in the form of £5 notes, the numbers of which were known, it did not prove a very difficult matter to trace the culprit. Two or three days later a detective stopped her in the streets, and for just a minute or two there occurred a dramatic little scene.

"I have reason," said the officer courteously, "to believe that you stole a lady's bag in Bright's Stores."

"How dare you, sir?" demanded "Bunty" indignantly. "I am not a thief!"

"Nevertheless," replied the detective, "I am going to take you to the station and charge you with the theft of a bag containing £46."

Take her he did. It was not the first time "Bunty" had been confronted with such a problem, and when she got inside the police station she made a fine show of scorn and gave vent to the opinion that there must be some mistake. Asked to explain the possession of certain money found in her bag, she said she had received it by post that morning, and did not care to give any further information as to its source. However, the police locked her up and proceeded to delve a little further into the matter.

Then came revelations fast and furious. A search of "Bunty's" address produced even more incriminating results. Banknotes came to light, to say nothing of innumerable expensive items of clothing for which "Bunty" found it difficult to account. There was also a matter of a fur coat to explain.

"Bunty" was certainly a wonderful picker-up of unconsidered trifles. The lady who owned the coat had worn it to a dance at the King's Hall. Some little

time after taking it off, another woman had gone to the cloakroom, handed over the ticket, and received the garment. As the article in question was subsequently found in "Bunty's" luggage, it seems to be a fair assumption that she was the person responsible for its loss. Anyhow, there it was, along with a great many more things which various shopkeepers in Bournemouth had missed during "Bunty's" sojourn in that salubrious seaside resort.

Confronted on all hands with evidence of guilt, she wept continuously, and no doubt made up her mind to make the best of a bad job by pleading guilty. There were dresses, cloaks and capes, silk stockings, dainty lingerie and many other items to account for. "Bunty" judiciously fainted as the full story of her iniquities was revealed to a crowded court, and when she had been brought to, the tears poured down her pretty face as a solicitor eloquently pleaded that she was a woman with a kink—in other words, a kleptomaniac.

But it didn't appear so convincing when the police went into the witness-box and regretfully informed the Bench that it was by no means the first occasion that "Bunty" had fallen from the narrow path. There were many other convictions for similar lapses, and after consulting together the magistrates announced that "Bunty" must pay the penalty; she would have to go to prison for six months. Still weeping copiously, she was led out of the dock and thence to the merciful oblivion of prison, leaving behind her a sorely distressed young husband, to whom the happenings of the morning had been as a thunderclap.

.

Six months elapsed. Exactly what happened while "Bunty" was in prison has never been made known, but there can be no question that bitter, recriminating letters passed between the wife and the husband who had

been so cruelly deceived. There had never been the slightest suspicion in his mind, but to give him his due he did not shirk his responsibilities.

"I shall never live with you again," he informed her; "you will realise the utter impossibility of the situation."

"Bunty," no doubt, expected nothing more, but at any rate she met her husband on coming out of prison, and tearfully pleaded with him to take her back. But all in vain. At the hotel in London where the couple met "Bunty" was given a sum of money and told to make the best of it.

"You have ruined me," said the husband. "All I want to do is to forget you."

"Bunty" grew hysterical, rashly threatened to kill herself, and once more resorted to the woman's weapon of tears. But all her artifices were useless, and when finally it dawned upon her that she and her husband had indeed to part for good she threw herself upon a sofa and declared she would drown herself that very same night. The husband refused to be moved; he had probably by then come to the conclusion that "Bunty" was nothing better than an arrant hypocrite, and that she would soon dry her crocodile's tears and resume her old life.

Events began to move rapidly. Some two or three days afterwards "Bunty" turned up at the Ferry Inn, Roseneath, in Scotland, where many strange things began to happen. First of all, in the security of her bedroom, she wrote out two notices of her own death! Then she went to the local post office, purchased a couple of postal orders, and sent them, accompanied by the notifications of death, to *The Scotsman* and *The Times*. They were quite brief, merely saying :

MACLAREN :—At Roseneath, Scotland, on February 28, 1924, accidentally, Helen Vera, wife of . . . Maclaren.

Then she disappeared. Her absence naturally aroused a good deal of speculation locally, but the matter-of-fact

Scottish folk who kept the inn gave no particular heed to her going, until the death notices were read and inquiries set on foot. Search of the room she had occupied revealed a bottle which had contained carbolic acid, but beyond that there was no clue whatever as to what had happened to "Buntie" MacLaren.

Where could she have gone? Had she thrown herself into Gareloch hard by, or had she merely walked off into the night and vanished as mysteriously as she had come? She certainly had not taken the carbolic acid in the hotel, because she would not have got very far if she had. And, for the matter of that, why should any woman travel the long journey from London to Roseneath, there to eat a hearty dinner, order a hot bath before going to bed, and then, carefully keeping out of sight, vanish into the night?

Was her body lying beneath the freezing waters of Gareloch? Nobody could say. Dragging operations were at once instituted, but still no sign of "Buntie." The local inhabitants told stories of high-powered motor-cars throbbing their way out of Roseneath at two o'clock in the morning, but then, again, nobody had seen any strange cars. A doctor who had motored along the road at half-past one in the morning had failed to meet a single soul, and the only clue that has ever given the slightest trace to her disappearance from the world is to be found in a railway porter who noticed a strange woman leaving Garelohead the morning after "Buntie" had dropped out of life.

She is not dead—that is absolutely certain. The probabilities are that she thought she would spoof the world she had known into believing she had committed suicide in Gareloch and thereby make some slight atonement to the husband she had so grievously wronged. Possibly, in some other name, she is leading an honest, humdrum life, remorsefully thinking of the happiness she might have known.

One must give her credit for intentions that were good, because it seems almost inconceivable that she could be designing enough to try and lose her identity so that she could start another career of wickedness afresh. Even an adventuress may have a heart, shallow as "Bunty's" was.

Scotland Yard has heard no more of her ; the dossier wherein is recorded the picturesque misdeeds of her wild and reckless youth is to all intents and purposes a closed book. One day, perhaps, she will turn up again, a little more hardened and a trifle more heedless of the penalties which such a life as hers incurs.

A DRAMA OF THE GHETTO

A DRAMA OF THE GHETTO

Now and again, like some flash of lightning out of the sky, there springs out of the Ghetto, which is part of the East End of London, some startling vivid drama which leaves the world gasping with its fierce intensity. Money is usually at the bottom of it; the Jews are not a race to place themselves within reach of the law for one of those blind, overwhelming bursts of passion which so frequently arouse men of other faiths to murder.

High noon, Whitechapel, in the year 1896. The Jews are celebrating the Feast of the Passover. The crowded streets are suffocated with chattering children of the East and their equally voluble parents. From practically every house the people come pouring forth, intent on enjoying to the full the greatest festival of the Jewish year. There is only one place completely devoid of any sign of life, and that is at 31, Varden Street, where there lives an old man named Goodman Levy.

There is a sharp rat-tat-tat at his door; a boy impatiently knocks for a minute or two without receiving any reply and then saunters off. He is followed shortly afterwards by a woman who repeats the process, still without result. She bangs again, so loudly that the neighbours near by crowd round wondering what is the matter. Alarmed, hardly knowing what to do, the woman goes next door to a tailor's shop bearing the name Schaffer on the window.

"Where is Levy this morning?" she asks.

"How should I know?" says the tailor. "I have not seen him since last night."

"There is something wrong; he cannot possibly be out. He asked me to come and have dinner with him."

"Ach, we must see," replies the tailor, and being a man of action he goes shuffling into his kitchen and finds a pair of steps.

"Come with me," he imperatively orders the woman. "We shall soon see whether he is in."

Out into the dingy little garden at the back the couple go. The tailor laboriously climbs up the creaking steps, peers over the partition, and suddenly says: "Good God, there is someone there!"

Inside Levy's house he has seen a big, broad-shouldered stranger, a burly-looking ruffian with a black beard.

"What are you doing there?" shouts the tailor loudly.

The intruder does not reply; he hurriedly bobs down out of sight and remains hidden for some few minutes while the terrified tailor anxiously asks himself what it all means. Once more he sees the stranger; again he shouts at him, and this time the man inside is heard scurrying away somewhere.

The tailor, with all his years, is not lacking in courage. He rushes out into the street opposite the door of No. 31, again sees the stranger, and then excitedly sends some of his friends for the police; there are always plenty of them in the streets of Whitechapel. In a couple of minutes two officers are upon the scene, hear what the tailor has to say, and then determinedly hurry through Schaffer's shop to climb over the wall at the back into No. 31. The tailor is still waiting in the street, half expecting and more than a little fearing that the burglar, for so he deems him to be, will make a bolt through the front door.

But it is the two policemen who have entered Goodman Levy's house who get the shock of their lives. Huddled up on the floor in the passage, in a crouching position as

though he had been shielding himself from some blood-thirsty maniac, is poor old Levy. He is drenched with blood from head to foot ; in his throat there is a fearful gaping wound. The two young policemen hurriedly examine the dead body—it is quite obviously beyond human aid.

They are courageous youngsters ; for all they know, the murderer may be lurking hard by, ready to kill or be killed. They listen for a minute but hear nothing. Then, hardly knowing what to expect, they proceed to search the house.

They go from room to room without finding any trace of the murderer until they reach the top of the house. And then there comes another terrifying revelation. Lying on the floor of a bedroom is the dead body of a woman, while all round her there are signs of a death struggle. Furniture has been flung all over the place ; the woman's clothing has been half torn off her body. There is blood everywhere. The woman's head, smashed to pieces with some heavy instrument, is a ghastly, sickening sight.

Although practically fainting with the horror of the sights they have seen, the two young officers are quick to act. One of them hurries off to Arbour Square police station to report the direful news, while the other remains on guard wondering, no doubt, if it will be his turn next. Up and down Varden Street there are cries of " Murder ! Murder ! Police ! Police ! "

In a fraction of a second there is a wildly excited surging crowd of aliens outside the house of death. Hot-foot, more police come running up, and as they arrive on the scene they are greeted with a shout : " Look, look, there's a man on the roof ! "

The new arrivals, just as excited as everybody else, hurriedly look up and see a man above the parapet which runs along the front of Levy's house. They waste no time ; they rush upstairs where the dead woman is lying, and

one of them, Wensley by name, sees a hole in the ceiling which he divines as the avenue through which the murderer has made his escape. His comrade, Richardson, wastes no time ; he strips off his tunic and belt and with a hoist from Wensley drags himself through the hole, to find that he is between the rafters and the roof. He crawls slowly and carefully along until he reaches daylight, and as he gets out on the roof he sees the murderer only a few yards away.

It is a dramatic moment. The murderer, evidently undecided what to do, is walking along the gutter between the gables of the house. He both hears and sees the oncoming enemy, while the officer, after calling out to Wensley that he has found the assassin, slowly crawls down the sloping roof courageously prepared to tackle his obviously desperate man.

Events move like lightning. Down in the room below, Wensley, with the intuitive genius which is part of his nature, dashes out into the street expecting that the murderer will jump for his life.

Up on the roof above the drama goes on. Like a beast at bay the black-bearded man turns upon his pursuer. He evidently realises there can be but one end to the battle, though it does not seem to occur to him there may be retribution waiting below. Just as Richardson is about to make a jump at him he puts a hand on the parapet and takes a flying leap to the pavement forty feet beneath. He falls, amidst a shriek of horror from the onlookers, with a sickening thud, which is partly broken by a little girl staring upward, and falls, strangely enough, right at the feet of Wensley. Wensley is upon him like a flash, but it is quite obvious the murderer has no fight left. He lies in the street groaning with pain, and remains there, closely guarded, until he is picked up and carried into Levy's house. There are cries from the infuriated crowd of " Lynch him ! " but the police, who have now surrounded

the place, thrust the people back and shut the front door.

The injured man is taken to the London Hospital close by. There he is found to be suffering from a fractured thigh, a broken arm, and terrible wounds to the head. Swathed in bandages, he is put to bed, guarded by policemen night and day until the time comes when he is well enough to appear before the magistrate, charged with the wilful murder of Goodman Levy and his house-keeper, Annie Gale.

It is a strange story which eventually comes to light, one of those tragedies of the underworld dating back many years. The murderer, when the surgeons have done their work and brought him back to his senses, says his name is Saunders and growls out that he has no further information to give. But then there comes upon the scene a detective-inspector named Stephen White, who recognises him as a desperate burglar who has served many terms of penal servitude. White knows the man lying in bed as William Seaman, on "ticket-of-leave" at the time of the terrible crime.

He has been known to Scotland Yard as far back as 1870, when he received seven years for burglary. He is no sooner released than he again falls into the hands of the police, and this time is sent back to prison for fourteen years to be followed by seven years' supervision. That he should have been kept in penal servitude for life is clearly proved by what he did shortly after being set at liberty again. He walks into a chemist's shop in White-chapel and asks whether he can borrow a hammer. The chemist, never for one moment suspecting evil intent, hands it over. The next thing that happens is that he gets a fearful blow over the head which sends him groaning to the floor. His till is rifled, and the assailant, throwing the hammer down, clears off.

Some time elapses before he is caught, but ultimately the police get him, and he is sent back to Dartmoor to serve another term of seven years plus the portion of his previous sentence which had been mistakenly remitted as a reward for good conduct.

Seaman, the name by which the police know him, appears to harbour murderous feelings all the time he is slaving away in the bleak Dartmoor quarries. He tells a fellow convict that when he gets out he will kill a certain "fence" living in Whitechapel, muttering that he is being bilked of a sum of money and will surely get his own back even if he has to swing for it.

Time goes on and he serves his sentence. He makes the long journey from Princetown to London and takes up his residence at a house in Millwall, where, it seems, he at once sets about carrying his threats into execution. He does not even bother to buy the tools with which he intends to settle his score with the "fence." When he goes off on the fatal morning he steals from his landlady a chisel, a coke-hammer, and a knife.

What happens when he arrives at 31, Varden Street can best be left to the imagination. Poor old Levy, probably half dead with fright, admits the unwelcome visitor and tremblingly inquires what he wants. There we may leave it, and instead of drawing upon our fancy as to the hot words that must have passed between the couple, set out the story Seaman himself tells as he is lying in the hospital bed surrounded by police officers.

"I suppose old Levy is dead and buried by this time?" he begins.

The officer, who is sitting on a chair with notebook in hand, says he does not know, although by this time Goodman Levy is lying in his grave.

The murderer, with no remorse in his eyes, pauses for a second or two, and then goes muttering on :

"I am glad I did for the old thief and the woman ;

she must have been sleeping in the old man's bed, as she was undressed at the time I killed her. I have been a good many times for the money, amounting to £70, and the old dog always made some excuse about it. I made up my mind to do for him. I am not afraid of being hanged. I shan't be like some of them."

Want of courage he certainly did not have. He would say no more that day. He dozed off to sleep as though murder and he were everyday acquaintances. But the following afternoon he again takes up his narrative.

"I have been a frequent visitor to the house," he goes on. "If the old Jew had only paid me the £70 the job would not have happened. You don't know one half of what there has been between old Levy and me. No one else knows it now, and I will keep it to myself. That morning I knocked at the door; old Levy himself opened it and I walked in. He said to me: 'The girl is upstairs.' I went up and found her in the room. When she saw me she shouted and began struggling, but I soon stopped her kicking. I then came downstairs and put the old Jew's light out. After the job was finished I heard someone knocking at the door. If I had opened it I would soon have floored them so that they would not have walked out of that house again alive. I know I am going to be hanged, and would not care if it was now, for I am tired of my life."

The law readily obliges him. As soon as his wounds have healed sufficiently he is taken to the police court, where, looking pale and desperately ill, he appears anything but the callous murderer he is. It is even necessary for the authorities to provide him with an armchair, where he sits with a sardonic smile on his face, listening to the stories which Richardson and Wensley tell. Life, indeed, appears to have no further charms for him, for he refuses legal aid, and himself, in clumsy convict fashion, cross-examines the police witnesses. The magistrate duly

commits him to stand his trial at the Old Bailey, and, still wearing that strange sardonic smile, he is carried out of the dock to be taken back to the prison hospital until the Sessions come round.

He does not appear to have the slightest wish to continue his life, and when his name is called at the Old Bailey he finds himself confronted by a judge who will fully oblige him in that respect. It is Hawkins who is the presiding deity, he who has gone down to posterity as the "Hanging Judge." The accused man, even though he is now on trial for his life, once more gruffly refuses the services of a barrister; except that he appears to take a certain amount of malevolent amusement in calling the witnesses liars, he does not seriously defend himself. He says to the officer who had taken down his confession: "You have been sworn on the Bible, but they ought to have sworn you on a pack of cards."

However, these little interruptions but briefly delay the course of justice. The judge sums up, and the jury, without bothering to leave the box, declare that William Henry Seaman is guilty of murder. The chaplain puts that ominous little square of black on the judge's head and sentence of death is passed, terminating with the customary "And may the Lord have mercy upon your soul."

The irony of it rouses the condemned man to one more outburst.

"Well," he cries out in a loud voice, "I hope the Lord will have more mercy on my soul than I have had on my body. I have not had much mercy on that."

He finds himself in good company when the time comes to pay the last dread penalty. There are two other men waiting execution, burglars by trade, like himself. Their names are Milsom and Fowler, desperadoes who have killed an old man at Muswell Hill with wanton brutality. Seaman, rather strangely, is called upon to play the part of peacemaker in this last dread

drama of the law. All three men are being hanged at Newgate, and the authorities are just a little fearful that Fowler, who has been betrayed by his confederate, Milsom, may attempt to deprive the hangman of a job by killing the traitor with his own hands.

Seaman has been a model of rectitude ever since his capture, and so it comes about that all three men are placed upon the scaffold together with Seaman between the murderers of Muswell Hill.

The executioner, Billington, pinions his prisoners one by one. Fowler goes first, followed by Seaman, with the fearful Milsom dragging himself along with faltering footsteps. Billington, with dexterous hands, puts the white caps over the heads of the doomed men. The sheriff gives the signal, the lever is pulled and the law has executed its vengeance.

BLUE BLOOD À LA CARTE

BLUE BLOOD *À LA CARTE*

THIS is only a short story, but it has its points. It concerns a lady who probably had never heard of the old English axiom that all the world loves a lover. But her experience of life had indubitably impressed upon her the fact that the world also loves a lord.

She thought, this ingenious-minded dame, that while she was about it she might just as well fly high. So, with an audacity which deserved better results, she bestowed upon herself the very bluest of blue blood. What did she become, entirely of her own volition, but a Royal princess ! Not one of your German or Russian princesses, as common as oysters in October, but a real live princess of a reigning house who, treacherously deprived of her birthright, had come down to living in the prosaic precincts of Regent's Park.

For quite a long time the lady got away with it, as they say in the classics. She told the story so well that the friends who came to her house deferentially addressed her as " Your Royal Highness," and were in turn treated with that condescending kindness which is the sole prerogative of royal rank.

Then came a slight crisis. The country her Imperial father had ruled had the misfortune to become involved in a war with Great Britain. One of the consequences of this lamentable affair was an order specially requiring all aliens living in England to register themselves forthwith. The Princess's existence was no secret ; quite a large number of people knew of the lady who said she was a disowned daughter of an Emperor. When, therefore,

officialdom inquired why Madame la Princesse had not notified her existence to the police, there were ructions.

"I decline to discuss the matter with you," said the lady haughtily when a minion of the law called upon her. "You know, of course, that I am of royal birth and that it is not necessary for me to be treated as a common subject."

She was so hoity-toity and so awesome that she frightened the policeman away. But later, Scotland Yard began to grow a little curious about her. A detective was entrusted with the task of digging out her antecedents, and while he was at it to ascertain exactly how much truth there was in her claim to be a princess. The *Almanac de Gotha* gave no clue to a daughter having been born of the Royal house which the Princess said was hers, and one had therefore to fall back on the story the lady related with so much verisimilitude herself.

Her birth had been a sore disappointment to her father, the Emperor. He, naturally, had been anxious for a son to succeed him, and when she, the unwanted daughter, had made her appearance on this earth, his mortification knew no bounds. There were innumerable terrible scenes in the Imperial Palace with the poor, heartbroken mother, who did everything in her power to assuage the Emperor's sorrow over the arrival of a daughter in place of the badly wanted son. But apparently all was in vain.

her disappearance with great equanimity. And so, as our old friend Hans Andersen says, the baby princess grew up. She was beautiful—that goes without saying. She lived her life in the bosom of a worthy Swiss family who kept her in complete ignorance of her royal birth. But all the time she knew that some mystery surrounded her. Frequently there came strange gentlemen from a foreign country who made anxious inquiries as to her welfare, until it gradually dawned upon her that she was really a princess in disguise. She determined to solve the secret that occupied all her thoughts, cost what it may. In the early 'twenties, therefore, without divulging her intentions to a soul, she saved up enough money to make the journey to her real native land. The innumerable questions she put to her adopted parents received nothing but evasive answers, convincing her, as nothing else could have done, that she was indeed of exalted birth.

A long time elapsed before she could get to the bottom of the mystery. But then, so she said, she discovered some people who knew that she had been spirited away when she was a baby in swaddling clothes. Had it not been for the fact that her mother was assassinated by an Anarchist—thereby snapping the only link whereby she could prove her right to royal rank—she would undoubtedly have been known to the world as "Her Royal Highness" instead of a plain Swiss *fräulein*. Reluctantly she abandoned her efforts to obtain recognition of her birth and in course of time found herself in England.

explain herself, failing which there was no saying what might not be done. Thereupon the lady gave way, if only to the extent of calling at Scotland Yard, where, with dignified but angry condescension, she almost bluffed the officials who interviewed her into believing that she was really a princess. She was allowed to take her departure with nothing more serious than a warning to be more careful in the future.

Unfortunately, however, the lady did not know when to leave well alone. Instead of going home like a good little princess, she must needs make her way to Fleet Street to visit a friend who edited a well-known newspaper. That gentleman believed the Princess's story, which only goes to show how cleverly she must have told it. Fuming and fretting, she related at great length how she had been grossly insulted at Scotland Yard, and wound up by asking the editor if he would not take the matter up and see that she was not subjected to any further humiliation at the behest of a common policeman.

The fools proverbially rush in where the angels fear to tread. The gentleman of the Fourth Estate, with more haste than wisdom, wrote to Scotland Yard to the particular official who had interviewed the Princess, saying that he thought a lady of royal birth, whatever her nationality, might very well be excused from being treated as an alien.

"Oh!" remarked the culprit when the epistle came to hand. "So that's her little game, is it? I'll give her princess."

In pursuance of this object, therefore, he detailed a diplomatic detective to call upon the lady and delicately inform her that if she could not substantiate her claim to being of royal birth there was a distinct possibility that she would be invited to leave the country.

"I shall write to the King!" cried the Princess, flaming with anger, when the information was made known to her.

"How dare you come into my house and treat me in this fashion? Get out of here before I have you thrown out!"

So that was that. Scotland Yard got on its hind-legs, resulting in inquiries which speedily established the fact that the Princess's story was a fabrication from beginning to end. The Royal family to which she claimed relationship had already heard about her and indignantly repudiated all liability. Long before the war they had been vastly annoyed by her preposterous pretensions.

In a roundabout fashion, necessary at the time, the officials of the Royal Court supplied quite a number of illuminating facts about this pseudo-princess. Instead of being, as she said, the only daughter of the Emperor, she belonged to a Swiss family in which there were no fewer than ten brothers and sisters! Furthermore, the information ran, this lady had a brother living in London, a music-master by profession, and a very decent fellow to boot, who had been vastly annoyed for many years by his sister's outrageous behaviour. So that Scotland Yard should have no more difficulty than was absolutely necessary, the address of the musician was included.

He lived at a house in Maida Vale, and on being questioned by the emissary of the law, grew violently angry.

"She a princess!" he shouted in great disgust. "Pah! She forgets that I have many photographs of her."

Without wasting any time, he rummaged through a bureau, and from it produced a big group photograph in which were to be seen a worthy-looking couple surveying with great pride ten big healthy children of that particularly wooden expression characteristic of youth having its likeness taken. In the middle of the bunch could be seen the "Princess," much younger, it is true, but none the less recognisable. Many other photographs came to light, and in all of them the "Princess" seems to have posed

herself with a proper regard to her own importance. Letters also were produced. Incriminating documents indeed.

"You'd better come along to Scotland Yard with me," said the officer, having judiciously primed the brother into calling the bluff.

"Yes, indeed I shall. She is a wicked woman to say that she belongs to a Royal family. Royal! Her father was a shopkeeper and an honest man. Thank God he never knew what a terrible liar he brought into the world!"

Following this little episode, the Scotland Yard people proceeded with the comedy they were proposing to stage. The editor who had so rashly championed the cause of the poor "Princess" received a letter, very discreetly worded, requesting his presence at a certain time. The lady also received one.

The stage was set with great care. The editor came in and the Assistant-Commissioner said to him, with a twinkle in his eye :

"Now you will see something." A knock at the door.

"The Princess —— to see you, sir."

Enter the Princess, very haughty. She graciously condescended to give the company greeting and courteously received the offer of a chair. The Assistant-Commissioner opened fire.

"You told us, Madame, did you not, when you were here last time, that you were of royal birth, and that you had no brothers or sisters?"

A good bluffer was the Princess. The sarcastic significance of the Assistant-Commissioner's voice must have warned her what was coming, but she didn't bat an eyelid.

"I believe so. But what has that to do with your request for my presence here to-day? I strongly resent being ordered about in this fashion."

"I daresay," said the Assistant-Commissioner. "But you took the liberty of informing this gentleman here that we had grossly insulted you, and that as a lady of royal birth you were entitled to special privileges. Is that not so?"

There was a profound stillness in the room. One could hear the clock ticking on the wall.

"Well, what of it?" asked the lady at length.

"I am proposing to prove," the Assistant-Commissioner retorted, "that you are nothing but a common impostor. You have told a very long and circumstantial story that you are the daughter of an Emperor. Do you still persist in that statement?"

"Yes, I do, and it is characteristic of the disgraceful way you have treated me that you should ask such a question."

But the Assistant-Commissioner remained unperturbed.

"You say you have no brothers or sisters?"

Another deep silence. The Assistant-Commissioner opened a drawer at the side and produced a photograph. He pointed to the figure of a girl seated in the middle of it.

"I wonder if that is you?" he murmured.

The "Princess" looked for a moment as though she would forget her Imperial upbringing. In fact, it seemed just touch-and-go whether she bashed the Assistant-Commissioner over the head with her umbrella. But with an angry exclamation she controlled herself.

"Oh, yes, I suppose it is," she replied. "Of course you know perfectly well that I was brought up with the family in Switzerland. But that has nothing to do with the matter. I have already explained how I was able to live with those people after my father had got rid of me."

"And they are not really your brothers and sisters?"

"No, certainly not. I have none."

The Assistant-Commissioner thought it time for the

dénouement. The lady was growing very annoyed. He pressed his bell, and to the officer who came in said : " Ask Mr. So-and-so if he will kindly see us."

The cat was out of the bag. Up jumped the " Princess," crying out : " I will not stay here to be insulted any longer ! It is quite evident that you are no gentleman."

But in the middle of her diatribe there walked in a quiet little man who took one look at the irate woman and then exclaimed, just as angrily as she : " Elisabeth, are you not ashamed of yourself ? "

A pretty little scene indeed. The " Princess " turned to the Assistant-Commissioner.

" Who is this man ? Is he a confederate of yours ? I do not know him."

It was too much for the little man.

" You do not know me, you bad woman ! I, your own brother ? You shameless creature that you should persist in this wicked imposture. You——"

But he got no further, for without waiting to hear another word, " Her Royal Highness " literally ran out of the room, banging the door behind her with a crash that went echoing throughout the draughty corridors of Scotland Yard.

THE FENCE WHO FOOLED THE
FORCE

THE FENCE WHO FOOLED THE FORCE

It was blowing a gale as Mr. Frederick Goldschmidt stumbled aboard the Channel packet at Antwerp bound for Harwich. He didn't like sea travelling at all, and the only ambition that stirred within him for the moment was to get down below to the security of his customary cabin.

The steamer swayed and bobbed at her moorings, and Mr. Goldschmidt shivered slightly as his imagination dwelt on the horrors of *mal-de-mer*. For many years he had gone across to England, selling the jewels for which he was so deservedly famous, but never in all that time had a successful deal compensated him for the agonies he suffered backwards and forwards.

He had a nice little parcel of stuff with him this time, principally pearls. There were a couple of necklaces for which he hoped to get £30,000. And diamonds! At the earnest request of some of his friends in the Antwerp diamond trade he carried with him in the little bag which never left him night and day stones worth another £40,000 or £50,000.

However, he wasn't thinking of the jewels he carried so much as the prospect of eight hours lying on his back, uncaring whether the ship sank or not. No reason, then, for him to take any particular notice of the two somewhat sinister-looking gentlemen who carefully followed him down the companionway and kept hard on his heels as he turned into the corridor amidships which led to his cabin. He got inside, took off his boots and coat, put the little black bag underneath the pillow, and composed himself as best he could.

Outside, mingling with the tramping of feet overhead, the wind howled and hummed. After what seemed an eternity of time the blast of the ship's siren signalled the hour of departure. Slowly she moved away from the quayside, swung out into the open basin, and then, with many an ominous dip of her bows, pointed her nose to the flat coast of eastern England.

Fitfully, and semi-conscious all the time, he dozed throughout the night. The ship creaked and groaned from top to bottom as she met the full force of the gale. Her timbers strained with strange sounds as she rose and fell in the wild seas, alternating with a roll which sent him bumping from one side of the bunk to the other. So many noises were there, indeed, that he paid little or no heed to a cautious, almost imperceptible turn of the door's handle, for, as has already been recorded, he was lying in that state of utter indifference to life or death which characterises so many people who travel on the sea.

The noises of the ship continued, and, if anything, redoubled in intensity. There came a hard, steady push at the door, but still Mr. Goldschmidt paid no attention. And so the night wore on until the early hours of the morning, when the shriek of the siren gave him the welcome intimation that the ship was making Harwich harbour. He went ashore, after liberally tipping the steward who brought him a cup of coffee, and took his seat in the boat train, still carrying the little black bag. Long years of journeying between England and the Continent had almost wiped out of his mind the possibility of robbery. Such things happened, he knew, but familiarity with the danger had long ago bred contempt.

He bought a copy of *The Times* from the boy on the station and settled down to read it as the train pulled out on the way to London, with the black bag safely tucked away between his body and the side of the carriage.

He declined breakfast, as he always did, nor did he respond at all amiably to the conversation of a couple of men who got into the carriage with him. When the train reached Liverpool Street he collected his various belongings and jostled his way through the surging crowd of travellers fighting for porters and taxicabs. Once or twice he got a nasty bump which nearly knocked the black bag out of his hand. But it had a chain on it which no one could see secured, by a strap round his wrist. The clumsy one apologised, and without thinking any more of the matter Mr. Goldschmidt shouldered his way to a taxicab and ordered the driver to take him to the hotel in Piccadilly which he always used when visiting London. He was still being followed, though he did not know it, by the two sinister men who had trailed him aboard the boat at Antwerp.

When he had changed his clothes and eaten an early lunch he felt better. He was essentially an optimist, was Mr. Goldschmidt, because when you have expensive jewels to sell it is no use looking down in the mouth. So off he went up Bond Street to interview some of his regular customers, the firms who could buy pearl necklaces worth £15,000 or £20,000.

Varying fortune came his way that afternoon, but he did not greatly mind. He left most of his jewellery with the different people he called on, returned to his hotel at eventide, and, after dressing for dinner, went down to the restaurant where he thoroughly enjoyed himself. He beamed upon the many pretty ladies he saw, sighed reminiscently as he thought of the days gone by, and slowly sipped a glass or two of kummel, which carried him well into nine o'clock before he decided to go upstairs again.

His bedroom seemed rather untidy, but he concluded the chambermaid had not yet been in to straighten out things for the night. He put on his coat and hat, took

a walk along to the Alhambra, where he had a look at the ballet for an hour or two, and then, feeling thoroughly tired, turned in.

He was so tired, indeed, that he never took the slightest heed of the fumbling and feeling that went on outside his door for the better part of half an hour some little time after midnight. Nor, apparently, did anyone else. The morning came and Mr. Goldschmidt arose. As soon as it was possible, he set about his business again, and, one way and another, had a more than busy day. It isn't possible, of course, to sell jewels such as he carried in five minutes, and so it came about that he had a pretty hectic time for three or four days afterwards. Pearl necklaces left at one shop had to be picked up and then offered to someone else ; diamonds over which he had spent many hours bargaining in person had to be carried around in the hope that he would find a buyer ready and willing to do a deal which might mean £30,000.

The property was insured, of course, but that didn't get away from the fact that it was a perilous business moving around the West End of London with a very comfortable fortune protected by nothing more than a little leather bag. Still, he had done it for so long that he didn't mind.

Had he been looking in the mirror in front of him, instead of bending down washing himself, he might have been in time. But it all took place in a flash of a second. A man wiping his hands on a towel suddenly threw it down, picked up Mr. Goldschmidt's bag, and literally flew out of the door.

Mr. Goldschmidt screamed. "Hi!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Stop that man! He is a thief!"

It all took place in less than seconds. The horror-struck Mr. Goldschmidt dashed after the robber, but just at that moment a man who had been washing himself at a basin nearer the door, moved across him and completely shut him off.

"Get out of my way!" shouted Mr. Goldschmidt, pushing the man on one side. But as he reached the door further misfortune overtook him. The lavatory, which now seemed alive with people, had but a narrow door, and just as Mr. Goldschmidt was getting through it he crashed into another man, who felt the impact so badly that he went down head over heels and carried Mr. Goldschmidt with him.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!" bawled the agonised Mr. Goldschmidt. From all over the place the cries resounded. But never were the exits of the Monico so crowded as they were that day. It could only have been a matter of seconds, although to Mr. Goldschmidt it seemed half an hour, before he reached the open air frantically looking for a glimpse of his little bag.

But, alas! it had disappeared into thin air. Someone told him that a man had come out and jumped into what seemed to be a waiting taxicab, to be driven up Shaftesbury Avenue at reckless speed. For all the use the information was it might have been north, south, east or west; there were taxicabs flying all round Piccadilly Circus, and Mr. Goldschmidt, after a hopeless look round, slowly walked back into the restaurant wondering whether

the thieves had been kind enough to leave him his coat and hat. However, he found these all right, and at the invitation of a constable who had been hurriedly called in, walked across the Circus to Vine Street police station, where he agitatedly detailed the contents of the little black bag.

.

Whenever a big jewel robbery takes place in London it is a pretty safe bet that some of the "heads" have been at work. These sort of things don't happen by chance, and so when Vine Street telephoned to Central what had taken place the C.I.D. at once prepared a list of the individuals who might have been concerned in the matter.

As far as the diamonds were concerned, it was practically a case of goodbye. Quite obviously it was a cut-and-dried job with very clever people at the back of it. The diamonds would be pulled out of their shanks, re-cut wherever necessary, and passed through the ordinary trade channels so secretly that their recovery was practically an impossibility. But it was a different story with regard to the pearl necklace. A heterogeneous collection of pearls is a mere cipher in value by comparison with a well-matched necklace.

It went on, then, for some weeks, this comic game of hide and seek, in which there were two prizes—£5,000 reward offered by the underwriters of Mr. Goldschmidt's insurance policy, and seven years' penal servitude which one of His Majesty's judges would no doubt award Cammy Grizard if things went wrong.

But as the weeks passed by and no signs of the jewels could be found, the hunt died down. Mr. Goldschmidt went back to Antwerp, and what had been something like a nine days' wonder was soon forgotten. Still, that did not mean that Cammy was altogether safe, for, as he knew quite well, the underwriters, who were faced with a claim of something like £60,000, would spare no efforts to recover the missing jewels. And as far as Scotland Yard and the numerous private inquiry agencies were concerned, there was every inducement to catch Cammy bending. £5,000 is a nice little sum of money for a detective officer anxious to retire to a comfortable life in the country.

Ward evidently thought so, but he couldn't see the money coming his way unless different tactics were adopted. So he called his men off and sought other avenues of information, and let it be known that as far as Scotland Yard was concerned the matter was at an end. No doubt the news got to Cammy's ears.

One fine night Cammy decided to give a little dinner party in which business could be mixed with pleasure. It was quite a select affair, and the men who composed it had just sat down, when there came a ring at the door of the house in Clapton where Cammy had his domestic existence. Cammy's maid had just been handing round the Jewish soup which opened the feast.

"What's that?" asked Cammy sharply. "If anyone wants me tell them I'm out."

There was undoubtedly good reason for his perturbation, for he had business on hand that night

in which uninvited guests would not be asked to take a hand.

The girl went to the door and Cammy could hear her saying timidly, "Mr. Grizard is not in." But the callers seemed to know their Cammy. Without waiting for an invitation, they unceremoniously barged into his dining-room, three big, burly fellows. In all probability Cammy was suffering just then from a conscience that was slightly guilty, otherwise he might have greeted his visitors with the proverbial hospitality of his race. However, the omission passed unnoticed.

"Hullo, Cammy!" exclaimed one of the trio, a formidable-looking individual with a heavy moustache. "Having a little dinner-party?"

"A few friends of mine," replied Cammy, waving his hands at the assembled guests. "Won't keep you long, Mr. Ward, if you want to see me. We're just having dinner," pointing to the soup on the table.

"I'm afraid your dinner will have to wait, Cammy," said Ward. "To be quite precise, I've come to turn you over, my friend, and I'm in a bit of a hurry."

"What's the matter now? You'll find nothing here to-night."

"Maybe. Nevertheless, I'm going to have a good look."

"All right," said Cammy resignedly. "I don't mind what you do so long as you don't plant anything on me."

The dinner-party came to a complete standstill. The soup lay untouched and grew cold, the guests sat there silent, while Ward and one of his men, Cammy carefully accompanying them, minutely searched the house for the thing he wanted. Cupboards, chests of drawers, fire-places, loose boards, were all probed by the inquisitive visitors without result. They came downstairs, where there was an even more stringent poking into corners where hidden treasure might be discovered. Then finally,

when every other possibility had been exhausted, the four diners were made to stand up, turn out their pockets, and undergo a "fanning" which left nothing to chance. But it was all in vain.

"Well," remarked Cammy sarcastically when it was all over, "are you satisfied, Mr. Ward? I'm sure I don't know why you are always suspecting me."

"No, I'm not in the least satisfied," said Ward. "You've been a bit too clever for me this time, Cammy. What have you done with it, Cammy? I know as well as you do that you haven't sold it."

Cammy sighed. "I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about, Mr. Ward. You're a terribly suspicious man."

The three detectives went out and Cammy heard the door bang behind them. The four men sat down again to their dinner, and Cammy, winking broadly, remarked that the soup was now unfit to eat. But before he sent it away he put a finger into it, not to test its warmth, but to fish out a nice pearl necklace worth £10,000, which somehow or other had escaped the attention of the three men who had just gone out.

THE FORGER

THE FORGER

SOMETHING like sixty years ago, long before Scotland Yard was as efficient in fighting the professional criminal as it is now, there existed an ingenious individual named James Saward. He was a barrister of the Middle Temple, but all his instincts were of a predatory nature.

"Jim the Penman" he was called by the people who knew him best, and a first-class penman he certainly was. Instead of practising his profession in the Courts, he employed a gang of expert thieves for the purpose of robbing letter-boxes. From the letters that were brought to him he extracted cheques, and then, with the signatures beside him, cleverly forged other cheques on the banks of his victims.

It went on for many years, this highly profitable little game of "Jim the Penman's," until such time as one of his plans went astray. Then the police got on his track, arrested him as he was leaving a City coffee-house, and had him sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. But although that was the finish of "Jim the Penman," it certainly did not mean that the clever form of robbery and forgery he invented came to an end.

There have been many other "Jim the Penmans" since that time, the king of them all being another highly-educated person who had been a thorn in the side of Scotland Yard for the better part of thirty years. Fortunately for the law-abiding citizens of London generally, this master forger spends the greater part of his life in the security of a convict prison, otherwise there is no saying what might happen.

He is known to Scotland Yard as Gerald Kennaway, and it would be rather interesting to discover how he ever came to be a professional crook. Probably it was a case of criminal instincts, because all his education and all his upbringing made it appear almost incredible that he could have joined forces with men continually at war with the police. His father held a high official position, sent him to one of the universities where he graduated with honours, and then launched him out into the world with every prospect of doing well for himself.

But as far back as 1898, when he was only in the early twenties, Scotland Yard strongly suspected him of forging the will of an old lady whom he had known personally. That little affair, however, went unpunished through want of evidence, but it was not long before Kennaway revealed himself in his true colours. In the year 1900 he got hold of a blank cheque belonging to a firm of solicitors in the City with whom he had had some dealings, no doubt for the purpose that was ultimately revealed.

Correspondence had passed between Kennaway and the solicitors, and very shortly afterwards, with a couple of confederates, he got to work. First of all, he took an office in the City, put up a fictitious name on the door, dumped a few sticks of furniture inside, and then advertised for a clerk. He told one of the youths who called upon him that he was a commission agent dealing in property, and that he occasionally had big sums of money through his hands.

So the boy started work.

"Take this cheque," said his new master the morning he arrived, "and get me cash for it."

"This cheque" was for a pretty tidy amount, no less than £1,810. Probably the boy opened his eyes a little at the size of it, but, suspecting nothing wrong, he promptly put on his hat and went off. Kennaway instructed him to get a £1,000 note, a £500 note, three £100 notes, and a £10 note.

The unfortunate clerk, with no suspicion whatever in his mind, duly presented the cheque. It must have been a first-class forgery; the cashier paid it over without question. He returned to his master, handed over the money, and was then given some work to do while Kennaway put on his hat and said he had to go out on important business.

No doubt it was fairly important, because he failed to return. The boy waited in all day, and then, thoroughly mystified, but still suspecting nothing wrong, went home. He came back the next morning to find the office door locked and no sign of his employer. All day he hung about waiting to see him. But in vain.

In the meantime, Mr. Kennaway had also been fairly busy. Had anyone been following him, his movements might have appeared rather curious. Shortly after the boy had given him the banknotes, he had taken a cab to the West End of London. There, glancing behind him all the time to see if he was being followed, he unostentatiously slipped into a foreign money-changers'. Well dressed, having about him that indefinable air of the English gentleman, he appears to have aroused no suspicion when he pulled a £1,000 note out of his pocket and asked for French francs in exchange.

"I have to go over to Paris on important business," he remarked affably. "Could you let me have francs to the value of £1,000?"

Well, it was no doubt a profitable little bit of business to a dealer in foreign currency. And maybe, also, Mr. Kennaway had chosen his man well. At any rate, he got his £1,000 worth of francs, and as quietly as he had come he disappeared.

He was kept rather busy that day slipping in and out of money-changers' offices. By four o'clock the afternoon he had got rid of all the English notes. The next day was an equally industrious effort on his part

Strangely enough, he seems to have been dissatisfied with the francs in his possession, and at intervals throughout the day he might have been seen going into other places and changing the francs back into English money. And this time he had a different tale to tell, something to the effect of having just returned from Paris.

Unfortunately for Kennaway, he was already known to the police as a disciple of "Jim the Penman." When the solicitors who had been so neatly defrauded of £1,810 discovered their loss they were naturally a little sore about the matter. The police were communicated with, and, as is customary in such cases, they had a good look round for forgers then at liberty.

Even at the best of times there are not a great many of these individuals about, and by a process of elimination it came down to Kennaway. After some little trouble the police "picked him up," kept on his trail for a time, and then ran him to earth, just like "Jim the Penman," in a City coffee-house. Kennaway had been in there indulging in a little light refreshment, though to be sure he could then have afforded a much more luxurious place, because at the time the C.I.D. men took hold of him just as he was coming out he had the nice little sum of £1,000 on him.

There was nothing of the "down-and-outer" about him. When he appeared in the dock at the Old Bailey, he had no less a person than Mr. Charles Mathews to defend him, and that highly-skilled lawyer, who was afterwards to prosecute so many criminals on behalf of the Crown, pleaded for Kennaway so well that he got him away with the very lenient sentence of eighteen months. Learned counsel told a long and pathetic story of a well-educated young man being led away by evil companions, until everybody in the Court was on the verge of tears.

Afterwards, no doubt, when Mr. Mathews had assumed the important office of Director of Public

Prosecutions, he smiled ironically when he thought of his wasted efforts in the direction of Gerald Kennaway. It was undoubtedly but a short time afterwards when his gentlemanly young client again succeeded in achieving notoriety.

On this occasion there seems to have been quite an ingenious little scheme. Lieutenant-General Lord Cheylesmore, leaving Waterloo Station one Christmas Eve for his house in the country, had left his luggage in charge of a valet while he spoke to some friends on the platform. Someone asked the valet a question ; he turned his back, and hey presto ! Lord Cheylesmore's dressing-case had disappeared. The hue and cry was at once raised, but for the immediate present nothing happened.

But shortly after Christmas, which had made it practically impossible for Scotland Yard to deal with the matter, many strange things began to occur. First of all there was presented at a Holborn bank a cheque for £170, which had written across it : " Please pay cash." It was also endorsed on the back " Cheylesmore," and it says a good deal for the skilfulness of both the forgeries, to say nothing of the *savoir faire* of the gentleman who presented it at the bank, that the amount was paid over.

The notes received were, like the others, at once changed into foreign currency and then back again into English money. It was not long, of course, before the forgeries came to light, and once more Scotland Yard took up the hunt. The notes were traced, and the person who had cashed them was described as a venerable-looking old gentleman, wearing dark spectacles, a skull cap, a shabby overcoat and with a shuffling gait.

Obviously a disguise. Still once more did Scotland Yard run down the list of their " clients " who specialised in forgery, and, to cut a long story short, a couple of detectives called upon Mr. Gerald Kennaway and invited

him to take up his residence, temporarily at least, in one of His Majesty's police stations.

A search of the culprit also brought to light the interesting fact that Mr. Kennaway rented a box at a safe deposit. There the police found no fewer than ten cheque books, the purpose of which it was not very difficult to guess. He could only be charged with forging and uttering the cheque for £170, but on this particular occasion the judge who tried him at the Old Bailey wisely came to the conclusion that he was much better off behind prison bars. Seven years' penal servitude was the sentence of the Court, and Mr. Kennaway could then truthfully say that he held a definite place in the great world of crime.

He never gave any trouble all the time he was in prison, although the incarceration appears to have had little or no effect. Certainly he kept out of serious trouble for two or three years after his release, but in 1910, when he was absolutely down and out, he went wrong again. He must have been pretty hard up because he was living in a Rowton House at the time. This after a brief spell as a bee farmer in Sussex; probably the bees stung him and made him come to the conclusion that he would "sting" somebody else.

The victim he chose on this occasion was a Homerton publican. It must have been a pretty easily worked trick. Kennaway, after patronising the place for a week or two, produced one day in gold £8, and asked the landlord if he could let him have one of his cheques for the amount, as he wanted to send it away to a friend in the country. Naturally, it did not occur to mine host that he was dealing with a famous forger. He cheerfully obliged, took his £8, and for the time being thought no more about the matter.

Of course, cheques for amounts like £6, £7, £8 and £9, are the easiest things in the world for an expert

forger to alter, and in a very brief period the publican's cheque for £8 had become £80. The crossing had been taken out with acid and the amount paid over the counter within twenty-four hours.

When Scotland Yard once more apprehended Kennaway, he was "wanted" for other and far more ambitious amounts than £80. There was another cheque for £665 which had passed through the hands of Kennaway and his gang. Stories were told in Court of a Clerkenwell public-house, much frequented by receivers of stolen property and letter-box thieves. However, on this occasion Kennaway had only to answer for forging and uttering the cheque for £80, though to be sure he paid a pretty stiff price for a comparatively trifling sum—five years' penal servitude.

Now what could such a life offer to a well-educated man as Kennaway undoubtedly was? When he had done his "time," he apparently made some sort of effort to give evil friends the go-by, but the probabilities are that he found it utterly impossible to obtain employment. Behold him in the year 1916, when he might have been fighting for his country, making still another appearance at the Old Bailey, this time for an ingenious fraud reminiscent of one he had participated in nearly twenty years previously.

He went to Somerset House, where he inspected the wills, and picked upon one made by a Miss Jane Leete, for the purpose of working a cunning fraud which only an educated man could dream of—or for the matter of that carry out. Although in actual fact Miss Leete had left little or no money whatever, Kennaway and an almost equally clever friend forged a will which showed that she had left to a fictitious person—himself under another name—£2,000 in War Loan. He substituted this forged will for the real but valueless one and then journeyed into the City, where he called upon a well-known

firm of reversion brokers, and said that he wanted to borrow £500 upon the legacy left to him by Miss Leete. He and his confederate actually had the audacity to apply for, and obtain, probate of the will they had fabricated.

There had been other people in the plot before Kennaway and his friend were taken into custody, and in all likelihood it was a case of dishonour among thieves. Whatever the reason, two other individuals undergoing a term of penal servitude for being concerned in the matter "blew the gaff," with the result that Kennaway, undoubtedly the master brain of a scheme that might have been developed to a disastrous degree, was charged before Mr. Justice Lawrence at the Old Bailey, and given a character by a Scotland Yard officer which resulted in a punishment of ten years' penal servitude. The C.I.D. man who was put in the box to give him a character described him as the finest forger in the country, and a man capable of successfully imitating anybody's handwriting.

It must have been gall and wormwood for such a highly-cultured man to spend what should have been the best years of his life in a convict prison, in the company of the riff-raff of the underworld. And if he had had any real brains it must have been rather forcibly brought home to him what a shocking mess he had made of a career that had been bright with promise.

been—a gentleman—but about his face there was the
n pallor. But he was no longer the aristocrat in
e ; his associates were now nothing but common
es.

Lennaway, however, soon taught them a few tricks.
out them to work robbing letter-boxes, and with the
of an individual who was highly skilled in removing
venient crossings from cheques successfully manipu-
the transfer of a few hundred pounds into his own
et, until Scotland Yard men once again ran him
t.

: was rather a pathetic figure he made in the dock
ime, a man tall and refined, speaking in a voice that
yed his Cambridge education. The life that had
him what he was had also taken out of him all the

There were no influential friends to give evidence
s behalf ; he stood revealed as a man who had fallen
e abyss, unable to extricate himself. The judge who
him, himself a Cambridge man, remembered him
e days when he, too, was an undergraduate, and
ubt it was a painful ordeal to order that the com-
n of years gone by should be kept in penal servitude
ur years.

ere was no sign of recognition between the two men,
s evidence of the fact that he had not altogether
ten the associations of earlier and happier days,
an in the dock courteously bowed to the judge,
hen turned down the steps that led to the oblivion
son.

BLACKMAIL

BLACKMAIL

I have set out the two stories in this chapter, which were given to me by one of the most famous private detectives in Europe, in the first person, and, for reasons that are obvious, have also altered the actual names of the participants.

"WHEN you are a Society detective," my friend began "you come across dozens of different instances of that eternal triangle which provides endless work and amusement for the Divorce Court and its habitués. Sometimes it is merely a case of the other woman, and I have always made it an inflexible rule never to touch those sordid affairs which could easily be done by any retired policeman.

"Occasionally bigamy enters into the question and complicates matters owing to the possibility of criminal proceedings. And hard on the trail of bigamy comes the infinitely worse crime of blackmail. There is an amount of it which is perfectly appalling, mostly on the part of women who live in the lap of luxury, thanks to the possession of a secret which would certainly ruin the victim if it became known.

"The people who know their London well hardly require to be told by me that there are thousands of ladies of comparatively easy virtue, the majority of them women mixing in very good society, who live on the passions of mankind. First and foremost there is the woman who is 'kept'; then there is the lady who has numerous admirers in her train, and with a good deal of cleverness gets money out of them all; last, but not least, there is the female blackmailer.

" In the course of my career as a detective I have come into contact with dozens of them, all the more dangerous because they look so beautifully innocent. One of these ladies, whom I shall call the Countess de Montmain, lived in London. About forty-five years of age, her particular hobby in life was to run the most fashionable house of assignation in the West End. Her ' friends ' as she preferred to call them, were what might be termed of an eclectic nature. That is, the best of everything was good enough for them, and Madame la Comtesse was sufficiently discerning to cater for their needs. She adopted this profession solely because I stepped in and put an end to one of the most astounding cases of blackmail the world has ever known.

" Something like fifteen years ago, when the Countess had first embarked on the career of a Society adventuress, she found herself in China, where she had been the mistress of a well-known German diplomat. Certainly the lady possessed a most wondrous beauty, to say nothing of being utterly devoid of all scruples. She did not last very long in China. She soon got tired of her protector owing to the discovery that another foreign official, Count de Montmain, then residing in Peking, was madly in love with her and prepared, not only to marry her, but to give her the use of his vast fortune.

" The marriage took place in China and there was some considerable trouble about it. In the first place, the newly-made Countess was informed that it was doubtful if the marriage would hold good in Europe.

to discover that he had made a terrible mistake. His wife not only wasted thousands of pounds on all sorts of ridiculous extravagances, but she also openly mis-conducted herself with any attractive man who came along. So outrageous was her behaviour that her husband was compelled to resign his diplomatic appointment and return to France. He left his wife behind, and frankly told her before he went, that he hoped never to see her again. She was allowed an income of £1,500 a year, and no doubt the Count congratulated himself on having made the best of a very bad bargain.

"Time went on; the war came and the Count forgot all about the wife he had married in China, to such an extent, indeed, that he took the liberty of marrying again, although he must have known perfectly well that his real wife was still in the land of the living. The allowance he had made her was still being paid, and therefore he knew for certain that the time might come when he would find himself faced with a prosecution for bigamy. However, he decided to take the risk, and, strange as it may seem, he had apparently learnt nothing by his previous experience. Instead of marrying a woman of good family whose antecedents were beyond reproach, he picked up another adventuress, a dashing dark-haired siren of a woman whom he met at Deauville in the height of the 1920 season. It is to be feared that the gallant Count was an easy prey to any designing woman, although admittedly only the ultra-clever ones could get him to the point when he would propose marriage. And no doubt it was a case of mutual deception.

"Certainly the adventuress was blissfully ignorant at the time that she was marrying a bigamist, while undoubtedly the poor Count had little or no conception of what was in store for him.

"But a very few months sufficed for the Count to realise that he had again picked a wrong 'un. His

bigamous wife was as impossible as the first, and made the money fly in a way that could not last for very long. There were innumerable bitter quarrels, culminating in a separation, which cost the poor philandering Count another considerable slice of his fortune.

"Madame la Comtesse the second did not know that, of course, that she was bigamously married. Naturally the Count did not dare to inform her, and so for the time being he got rid of her and doubtless began to look around for Madame la Comtesse the third. But then things began to happen, very shortly after my coming on the scene and unearthing a little comedy—or perhaps some people may like to term it a tragedy—which would undoubtedly furnish the material for a successful play. This is actually what occurred.

"One day at the Carlton Hotel, Countess the first was lunching with some friends—she had returned from China a year or two previously—and during the course of the meal some people came up and were introduced to her. Naturally, to a Society adventuress the title of Countess de Montmain was an invaluable asset, and she was duly introduced to the newcomers in that name. Enter the long arm of coincidence, in a manner that only a playwright would dare to assume.

" 'Why, that's very strange ! ' ejaculated one of the men in astonishment. ' I know another Countess de Montmain. In fact, she is in the hotel now. I saw her sitting in the lounge waiting for someone as I came in.' "

"Imagine the astonishment ! Madame la Comtesse the first replied that it was utterly impossible, as she, to the best of her knowledge, was the one and only Simplicite Pure.

" 'It cannot be,' she said. ' I married the Count in China in 1910, and I certainly have not divorced him nor has he, to my knowledge, divorced me ! ' "

" 'Well, I don't know anything about that ! ' replied

the man who had dropped the bombshell. 'But I certainly do know a lady who calls herself the Countess de Montmain, and if you like I will introduce you to her.'

" 'By Jove !' " he cried suddenly, 'there she is coming in !'

"The eyes of all the little party turned to the door, where there was seen entering a tall, flashing-eyed woman, strikingly handsome in her appearance and gowned in a manner that savoured of unlimited wealth. She was accompanied by a male friend, and the pair of them, unaware of the discussion that was taking place, seated themselves at a table and began their lunch.

"Nothing was done until the meal was over and then the two Countesses were introduced. The individual who undertook the task discreetly vanished from the scene the moment he had done the deed. Like a wise man, one doubtless concluded that there would be trouble in store for the poor Count. Nor was he mistaken.

"That was the beginning of what in my experience was a most amazing case of blackmail for many years. The two wives, adventuresses both, cared not a rap for the troubles of the Count. In good American, they 'got together,' and evolved one of the finest schemes of blackmail that I have ever known, the victim, of course, being the husband.

"First of all, Countess de Montmain the second wrote to her bigamous husband to inform him that she had made the dreadful discovery that she was not really his wife, and, *sotto voce*, that she was consulting her solicitor as to whether she should take criminal proceedings against him. In the meantime, he would be wise to meet her lawyers in consultation and decide what should be done.

"A shady solicitor arrived on the scene, fully apprised of all the facts. The Count's lawyers came from Paris, and there was a conference in London at which it was delicately hinted that the bigamous wife should only

abstain from invoking the aid of the law if she were paid a considerable sum of money. The French lawyers blustered and stormed and retaliated with a threat of prosecution for blackmail. But they were only bluffing, because the last thing the Count desired was to find himself in a criminal court charged with bigamy. In the end the sum of £5,000 was paid over, on the understanding that Countess de Montmain the second abstained from all further claim on her husband.

"All the time this was going on the two wives were meeting each other daily and reporting progress. No doubt the two ladies shared the money, and therefore it is hardly to be wondered at that the time came—and not very long afterwards—when more was needed.

"This time Madame la Comtesse the first made her appearance on the scene. She wrote, also through her solicitors, to inform the unfortunate Count that she was still in the land of the living, which doubtless he would hear with much regret, and adding that to her great surprise she had been informed that he had married again.

" 'Of course,' the letter went on, 'this was a terrible shock to our client, and no words of ours are needed to emphasise the damage to her reputation which is being done owing to there being another Countess de Montmain who is well known in London Society. We suggest that you come to London at once and see what is to be done !'

"Talk about Bluebeard's eighth wife ! What the poor Count thought about it all can well be imagined, but he could do nothing more than once again send his lawyers over to find out how much the first wife wanted to keep her mouth shut. The real Countess was a little more expensive than the bigamous one. It cost the worried husband £10,000 and a formidable sum in lawyers' costs to meet her ideas of compensation. When that was

done, he probably shook hands with himself and deluded himself into the idea that he was well out of the wood.

" But, alas ! Within six months of paying out the first wife there came another demand from the second, who made no bones about confessing that she was very hard up, and meant to have money by hook or by crook. And she got it, another £5,000, which she faithfully promised would be the last.

" But very shortly afterwards the first wife also ran short, and she also rudely demanded another substantial sum as the price of her silence. Had the unfortunate Count immediately put the matter in the hands of the police he could have stopped the blackmail at once. But this he would not do, despite the pleadings of his lawyers. Being very well known in French Society, the idea of the exposure which must necessarily result was so abhorrent to him that he preferred to go on paying.

" Inside less than four years he had paid out over £45,000 and the time had come when he must either be utterly ruined or else put a stop to the operations of the two vampires who were bleeding him white. I was brought into the case to see what could be done, and after many consultations with the husband and his solicitors, I advised him that the only way out of the difficulty was to obtain such incriminating evidence that it would be possible to go to the two women and threaten them with a long term of imprisonment for blackmail.

" I had no great difficulty in getting on their tracks. They were well known in the West End, particularly in the fashionable night clubs and cabarets, where the women of their class are wont to seek their clients. They were meeting each other almost nightly, although I discovered that they took very good care never to go to each other's flats.

" Getting hold of the evidence I wanted proved a

difficult job which lasted many months. In various disguises I got into the flats of both women, searching for incriminating letters. At various times I was an electrician, a rent collector, an income tax collector, and Heaven alone knows what else. One afternoon in the flat of the real wife I found a new maid, a young girl just up from the country, who had been left in charge while the other servants had gone out for the afternoon.

"I asked her if she would like to go to the theatre that night. She would, and like a lamb cheerfully consented to go down to Piccadilly and book the seats. It gave me something like half an hour to myself, and during that time I ransacked every drawer and every box in the flat for letters that would enable me to put an end to the blackmail once and for all. Possibly it may have meant gaol for me had I been caught, but if I knew my Countess I don't think she would have dared hand me over to the police. At any rate, I was prepared to chance it, and when I had finished my burgling I had sufficient letters in my possession to send both Countesses to gaol for ten years' penal servitude.

"The termination of this strange drama came about a week later when the two vampires, unbeknown to each other, were invited to call by appointment at a certain solicitor's office. Countess de Montmain the first was seated in a room wondering what she had been sent for, when in walked her fellow blackmailer. What a study in expression when they saw each other!

" 'Oh!' they both cried in astonishment, 'what does this mean?'

"The gentleman in charge of the matter wasted very few words upon the precious pair.

" 'I think both you ladies will realise that the time has come when your blackmail comes to an end. These letters,' producing the bundle I had burgled, 'would, if sent to Scotland Yard, be sufficient to keep you out of

arm's way for a very long time. For obvious reasons the Count is not going to prosecute, but I can assure you that if there is any repetition of your demands, he will certainly face the exposure and put a stop to your disgraceful conduct once and for all.'

"The two Countesses looked at each other, dumb-founded. The solicitor, like a wise man, silently disappeared. A few minutes later he saw them go out together. The bluff had worked."

.

"Year by year," continued the detective the following day, "a new trail is being blazed across the sunlit wastes of the Indian Ocean. Gorgeous Indian princes and their dazzling bejewelled retinues, anxious to taste of the famed joys of the Western world, come trooping across the sea from India's coral strand, bringing with them visions of fabulous wealth which immediately excite the avarice of the needy and greedy of Europe.

"Many of our native princes are profitable game for that most despicable species of human being—the blackmailer. From the moment they arrive the blood-suckers are on the watch for some slight indiscretion which may give them the opportunity of extracting a big sum of money as the price of their silence. Almost invariably that indiscretion revolves around some fair female of undeniable beauty and equally undeniable lack of principle.

"The story I am about to tell here concerns the young Potentate of an Indian state who came to London some years ago with money to burn. His income was probably not less than £500,000 a year, and as the dusky Potentate was quite prepared to spend it, he found no difficulty whatever in making dozens of friends. This particular gentleman's tastes lay in the theatrical world. The beauty of the musical comedy chorus had penetrated to his realms

in far-distant India, and it may be said forthwith that His Highness wanted to test the proof of it for himself. He began his stay in London by giving a champagne supper to the chorus of one of our best-known theatres, at which dozens of girls received diamond rings as a present. In a very short space of time the Indian Potentate had chosen the lady who should reign as queen of his harem during his stay in Europe.

"Unfortunately for him, the lady he picked upon was of a somewhat designing turn of mind. She realised that her princely lover would sooner or later return to his native land, and as a matter of course would leave her behind. So she made hay while the sun shone, and within a month or so had wheedled out of the prince something like £10,000.

"Even then no great damage might have been done had not His Highness been a lover of a rather too ardent turn of mind. He committed the blazing indiscretion of revealing to the lady the passion he felt without due regard of what might happen in the future. Possibly he was not to blame, because his limited experience of life in the Occident had not hitherto brought him into contact with the genus blackmailer. At all events, His Highness put things in his letters to the lady which very few people would have cared to have read in open Court.

"Naturally, I knew nothing about this little romance in its early stages, nor did the fact of the Indian Potentate being in London make any appeal to me. It was not until some months later, when I learned that he had already been blackmailed for £30,000 and was then being confronted with a demand for something like £400,000, that my services had to be requisitioned.

"And what a sorry tale it was! The Indian Potentate naturally did not want to confess what an utter fool he had made of himself, but I told him plainly, when I

interviewed him at his hotel in Paris, that unless I had the full story I would decline to touch the case.

" Briefly, for I have no space in which to relate all the details, the prince had been called upon shortly after casting his lady-love adrift by a man who said that he represented a lady who had better be known as Miss Kitty Castleton, and wanted to discuss a very private matter. At first the Indian Potentate would have nothing to do with him, until the visitor said :

" ' I think Your Highness will change your mind. Miss Castleton has given me certain letters which you wrote to her. We think they are worth some money. What does Your Highness say ? ' "

" The Indian Potentate could say nothing.

" ' If I had him in India I would have known what to do with him,' he said to me afterwards, his great black eyes flashing with anger. ' He would never have left that hotel alive.' "

" Well, the blackmailer did his work very cleverly. He said plainly that unless Miss Castleton's claims were satisfactorily settled, she would bring an action for breach of promise, with the compromising letters as corroborative evidence.

" What was in the letters cannot be revealed here. I never saw the originals myself, but I certainly did see the photographic copies which the blackmailer took for his own private purposes, and which he afterwards used in an attempt to obtain a further £400,000.

handed over the letters in return for £30,000, but before doing so had evidently had them photographed.

“ ‘What is it you want me to do,’ I asked, after I had heard the whole tale. ‘You say you dare not prosecute this man. In any case, he can do nothing. He cannot sue you.’

“ ‘I know that,’ said the Indian Potentate impatiently. ‘But you will realise that I cannot go back to India with even copies of these letters around. The originals I have burnt, but the others I must get back at all costs. There will be £5,000 for you the day you bring them to me.’

“I will give the blackmailer his due. He made no secret of his whereabouts, and in fact openly boasted that the Indian Potentate dared not prosecute him for blackmail. So that very same night I boarded a train at the Lyon station in Paris en route for the Côte d’Azur, where my man was basking in the sunshine of Monte Carlo. I called upon him at his hotel and told him my business.

“ ‘I want those letters you have,’ I said. ‘The Indian Potentate has instructed me to hand you over to the police if I do not get them forthwith. The Sûreté have already issued a warrant for your arrest.’

“He was a cool customer, that £400,000 blackmailer. I can see him as plainly as though it were yesterday, negligently leaning back in an easy chair sipping an apéritif, beautifully dressed—no doubt on the Prince’s money—the very picture of the villain of fiction. He seemed to be on excellent terms with the world generally and regarded with pained surprise my refusal of a drink.

“ ‘How do you come into this plot?’ I asked. ‘Surely you know what the consequences will be?’

“ ‘My dear fellow, don’t talk damned nonsense! You know as well as I do that our Indian friend does not seriously dream of bringing the police in at all. How I came into it doesn’t matter to you. The lady is an

old friend of mine—a very old friend, I might say. Our friend has had his fun and now he must pay the piper. It will teach him a lesson, if it does nothing else.'

"I tried more threats and then I tried cajolery, but I might just as well have saved my breath. I allowed the blackmailer to stand me an expensive lunch—still the Potentate's money—in the hope that a bottle of wine might soften him, but it was all in vain. He bade me a pleasant adieu, hoped that we might meet again, and promised to write to me in Paris and keep me informed of his whereabouts. So when I took my departure I realised I was up against something pretty formidable in the way of blackmailers.

"I saw the Monte Carlo police before I returned to Paris, but they could tell me nothing about my man. They only looked upon him as a well-to-do dilettante Englishman who seemed to have plenty of money, and expressed only mild incredulous surprise when I told them the story of the £400,000.

"The Indian Potentate was eagerly awaiting my arrival.

" 'Have you got them?' he asked excitedly.

" 'No,' I said. 'It's going to be the hardest job I've ever done. This fellow knows his business. I've come back to get further instructions. I may be able to get the letters, but it is going to be dangerous. I shall want £1,000 for expenses.'

"For something like two months I followed my man all over Europe. He didn't in the least mind sending me picture postcards, hoped I was getting on well, and occasionally asked me to send his greetings to the Potentate. That poor chap didn't dare go back to India, and he wrote me the most pathetic letters imaginable, imploring me to put an end to his anxiety.

"I met the villain of the piece in Rome, Venice, Budapest, Vienna, Baden-Baden, Deauville and all the other fashionable resorts of the globe-trotter. On no

fewer than a dozen different occasions, with the aid of trusty sommeliers whom I know, I ransacked his luggage, but never found a trace of the Indian Potentate's letters. Either he carried them on his person or had hidden them away, or perhaps the whole thing might have been a bluff. For all I know, no copies might have been made.

" One night in Venice, when all the world was still, and the only sound to be heard was the tinkling of the music on the Grand Canal, I came across my blackmailer raptly contemplating the black waters. Like a flash the inspiration came to me. I stumbled against him, and with a cry he disappeared into the canal and I after him. A shout rang out, and even as I went down I could hear people running to see what had happened.

" But I got my man down in the depths, and with a great fuss of pretending to rescue him nearly succeeded in choking him. The crowd pulled us out dripping wet, loudly applauding my gallantry. A cab came up, and into it the pair of us were bundled off to the nearest police station to explain what had happened.

" The blackmailer was nearly done for, and I helped to undress him so that he could be put to bed. Underneath his clothing in two oilskin cases I found the photographic letters. In the twinkling of a second they were in my soddened pocket. An obliging chief of police sent off to my hotel for a change of clothing, while my unconscious victim was carted off to hospital.

" Venice saw me no more. I read the letters and they were certainly ardent enough to make Don Juan himself blush. Forty-eight hours later I arrived in Paris.

" ' Here are your letters,' I said to the Indian Potentate. ' I hope it will be a lesson to you. I might have been charged with attempted murder if anybody had seen what I did to get them for you.'

" For just a second I thought His Highness was going

to blaze out at my presumption. He bristled all over, then suddenly looked at his disgraceful letters and laughed shamefacedly. Without a word he went into another room, came back in a minute with a cheque for £5,000, and bowed me out without so much as offering to shake hands or thank me for what I had done.

He may have heard of the blackmailer again for all I know or care. Possibly there may have been plates of the letters. If so, I wish the Indian Potentate joy. The next time he is blackmailed he can find someone else to get him out of his trouble.

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR

THINGS were going none too well with that much vaunted organisation known as the German Secret Service. Three of its leading lights, determined-looking fellows, were sitting in an office in New York gloomily discussing something that was neatly typed out on a big sheet of paper. When I say that the trio consisted of the Kaiser's arch-spy, the Captain Baron von Rintelen, Captain von Papen, Military Attaché, and Captain Boy-Ed, who ostensibly occupied himself with naval matters, it may well be believed that their deliberations meant mischief to someone.

"Gott strafe them all!" exclaimed von Rintelen angrily.

"Why the devil can't they mind their own cursed business?" asked von Papen, while Boy-Ed, habitually reserved in his speech, merely laughed.

The cause of their annoyance was sufficiently obvious to anyone who could read the document that lay on the table before them, especially when the circumstances then existing in the United States of America were borne in mind. It had originally been a message in the secret code of the Foreign Office, the key to which was possessed only by the three men present and the Ambassador. This is what von Rintelen made from the translation :

England receiving very large quantities shells from American factories. Plans for fomenting strikes must be pushed forward all speed. Sailing from Bergen next week Fritz Weidemann organising secretary Steel Workers' Union

Heinrich Hertz Socialist member Reichstag. Supply both men necessary funds and render all available assistance. Inform all agents centres where munitions being made.

"Who are these fellows?" von Papen inquired of von Rintelen. "You ought to know. You've just left Berlin."

Von Rintelen shook his head. "I know next to nothing about them," he said. "This Hertz is one of those infernal agitators who are always upsetting our workmen. If I had my way, and I told the Imperial Chancellor so before I left, I would put them all up against a wall and have them shot. Foment strikes here! He ought to be able to do that well enough, for he's been doing nothing else ever since the war broke out."

"And what about the other swine?"

"Weidemann?" said von Rintelen. "He's been all over the Fatherland asking the men in the shell factories what they want to kill their fellow-beings for. The Staff wanted to have him shot, but the All-Highest refused. He said that such a man might come in useful one day. Apparently he's so indispensable that they're sending him over here to bungle our work."

"Never mind," retorted von Papen soothingly, "we can pack the pair of them off to the Middle West, and if they get too troublesome a word in the right quarter will keep them out of our way for the rest of the war. These American Secret Service men will jump at the chance of making a capture or two."

They turned up in New York about the middle of May, sent to von Rintelen by hand a cryptic message announcing their presence in New York, and requested to know when they might have an interview.

The Baron made a rendezvous at an hotel in Brooklyn kept by one of the discreet Germans who helped him in his work. Weidemann proved to be a tall, dissatisfied man of middle age, with an expression of face proving his lifelong dissatisfaction with the state of the world. His companion looked more amenable to reason ; his countenance was quite jolly by comparison, and he was inclined to be apologetic when he found himself in the company of such an exalted personage as the Captain Baron von Rintelen, whom all Germany knew as the intimate friend of the Kaiser.

As the Baron entered the room they both rose to their feet, clicked their heels, and made him an awkward bow.

" Well," said von Rintelen as amiably as he could, " you are the men who know how to make strikes. I already have more assistants of your sort than I know what to do with. All they do is to take my money and tell me lies. They don't want strikes in this country ; they're much too busy making money, and they don't trouble their heads as to whether the shells they send out are intended to kill their relations in Germany."

" We are patriots, Herr Baron," declared Weidemann proudly. " We do not do this work for money. It may be that our lives shall be at stake ; those we shall sacrifice gladly if we can but render the Fatherland some signal service. Have I not been received by the All-Highest himself in the Imperial Palace at Potsdam ? "

" The Herr Baron misjudges us," broke in Hertz hotly. " Am I not a member of the Reichstag, and as such qualified to take part in the innermost counsels of the Fatherland ? Your Excellency forgets that it was I who suggested that Weidemann should come to America

with me and stop these traitors from helping to kill their own flesh and blood."

"I wish you'd go to hell," said the Baron. "Are there not enough bunglers at work here without adding to their number? You'll have to be very careful; I can't walk down the street without two or three of those damned American Secret Service men following me. They go through my luggage in every hotel I stay, and they'll go through yours the moment they get a suspicion you're Germans. Let me have a look at your passports," he said suddenly.

"H'm, Norwegians, are you? Well, mind you have a good tale to tell them if they pull you up. And, mind you," he added menacingly, "never by any chance mention my name. If you do, your life won't be worth much. You'd better stay here till I can let you know where I want you to go first. They're turning out millions of English shells at the Bethlehem Steel Works; if you can go down there and make some trouble you'll probably get the Iron Cross."

He went off, leaving behind an impression that he wasn't a man to be trifled with. Weidemann looked at Hertz, and Hertz made a face at Weidemann, after which, on the strength of a nice fat packet of money von Rintelen had left behind, they went downstairs, routed out the Teutonic gentleman who kept the establishment, and impressed upon him the desirability of supplying them with the finest food German ingenuity could devise.

Thoroughness marked every move of Messrs. Hertz and Weidemann. Instead of spending their spare time drinking and eating, as most true sons of the Fatherland would have done in such circumstances, they insisted upon von Rintelen introducing them to all the Germans in New York who mattered, even including the Ambassador. "For," as Heinrich Hertz assured his brother proletariat, "are we not as good as they and perhaps

better ? Who knows, my dear Fritz, that you and I might not find ourselves before long in the place that this haughty Bernstorff now occupies ? ”

Whereby one might gather that there was no great enthusiasm about their arrival in the Embassy of the All-Highest at Washington.

“ What are you going to do about these schweinhund ? ” asked His Excellency of von Rintelen a week after their coming. “ Have you sent them away yet ? ”

“ They will go within a few days. I have already given them a list of our principal agents, and they will be leaving for Detroit shortly. It will be a good riddance,” he added viciously, “ and I hope something will happen to them. I have had a letter from Joseph Ortweiler, our man there, who demands to know why I am permitting such people to interfere with him. He has been informed that it is the special order of the All-Highest. Your Excellency approves, yes ? ”

“ Why not ? ” replied the Ambassador gloomily. “ It is no business of mine. The time has long since gone when the Imperial Government thought it necessary to consult her Ministers about anything that is done. Even you, my dear Franz, were sent here without asking me,” he added, shaking his head sadly. “ I can see nothing but trouble before us.”

Von Rintelen was not often given to any show of feeling, but on this occasion he did something that surprised even himself. He went over to the aged Ambassador and gently patted his shoulder.

“ Your Excellency shall not be worried by these swine of the gutter ; they will depart on their mission and perhaps they will disappear. I have work far more important than allowing such men to glorify themselves at our expense.”

The Ambassador nodded gloomily and went about his

duties. Von Rintelen spoke no more than the bare truth when he said that pressing matters were engaging his attention. That very afternoon he had to see three of his agents who had been down into Mexico for the purpose of stirring up another revolution in that unhappy land, the idea being that the United States Government would have to interfere and so prevent England having the use of her munition factories.

He had great schemes on hand for running the blockade that was slowly but surely strangling Germany; there were Swedish ships lying in New York harbour waiting the forged clearance papers that were being fabricated for him by a noble-minded patriot who had acquired—in the intervals when he was not staying in Sing-Sing—much practice in the gentle art of bilking banks. It was necessary also to arrange the supply of passports, because word had come from Rotterdam that the last lot were not passing the scrutiny of the British, with dire results for the ladies and gentlemen who carried them. Altogether, then, the Captain Baron was tremendously busy.

Herren Weidemann and Hertz, however, refused to be ignored. With whole-hearted German industry they had compiled a list of the towns they wanted to visit and requested that von Rintelen should supply them with the names of his agents there. Also, it was necessary that they should have some money; would the Herr Baron kindly let them have the sum of 50,000 dollars for preliminary expenses? Later, when their plans for strikes that would paralyse the entire munition-making business in America were matured, a greater amount would be required.

"You must do as you please," said von Rintelen. "I wash my hands of you entirely. Here is your money, and here is the list of the men upon whom you will call. They will be able to give you much more information than I can, and I can only suggest, if you do not wish to spend the

rest of the war in an American gaol—to say nothing of me—that you will keep your mouths shut and, above all, carry around nothing that is likely to incriminate you—or me. If you wish to communicate with me, do so in your code number only. My letters are being opened by the American Secret Service.”

The two agitators went off, firmly convinced that he was romancing. They expected to be away for fully a month, for their itinerary was a comprehensive one, including Baltimore, Cincinnati, Frankfort, Chicago, Milwaukee, Pittsburg, Detroit, Cleveland and Buffalo, as well as a visit to that hotbed of Allied intrigue, the Bethlehem Steel Works. Hertz, being a man of peace, was all for gentle persuasion, but Weidemann said: “No, friend Heinrich. We shall strike a blow that will frighten the lives out of these unscrupulous, money-grubbing Americans. It may be that we shall find some high-minded son of the Fatherland who will remain behind one night and explode a bomb that will blow these shell-makers to perdition. That is, of course,” he added hastily, “after you and I have left the neighbourhood. It would be fatal that our work should be interrupted.”

They made their way to Chicago and notified their coming to Albert Kronheimer, a whole-hearted German who appeared to regard them with no great favour. In the security of his private office—he owned a big store employing many hundreds of people—he warned them against betraying their German nationality. “You are not wanted here,” he said candidly. “The time is not ripe for such people as you. We have many Germans, yes, but they have settled down in this country and will do little or nothing for the Fatherland. Do I not know them? Have I not dozens of times asked them for various services and been refused? As far as the munition factories are concerned, I can only give you the names of the trade union bosses who have power to call out the

men. If there is anything else you want," he remarked firmly, "you must arrange it yourself. I will have nothing to do with it."

He was a big, stout fellow, very prosperous, and the taciturn Weidemann sourly told him he did not know of the terrible privations his countrymen were suffering in Germany. They parted company on terms that were the reverse of amiable.

Von Rintelen was much too occupied to pay great heed to the grumbling letters that arrived from the agents in the towns that Weidemann and Hertz visited. Also, the two delegates appeared to be doing much better than he had ever expected.

"Look at this," he said to von Papen one afternoon with great glee. "This" was a lengthy report in the New York papers about a series of mysterious strikes that had broken out in various munition-making centres. "Our Socialist friends are better than we thought. I must cable the news to Berlin and take care that we receive the credit that is our due."

"I beg of you to be careful, my dear Franz," said the military attaché. "I am getting very uneasy about these telegrams you are so fond of sending. Yesterday afternoon, in talking with one of the Senators, I got a hint that our message about the Lusitania had been deciphered. We shall have to get our code changed, or, failing that, send our communications by hand. I do not trust these Americans. I think they are in league with the British. One of the telephone operators who is in my service has told me that secret wires are being put into the British Embassy and that it is now impossible to find out what they are talking about."

"Bah!" scoffed the Baron. "You are growing nervous; just leave everything to me and there will be no trouble."

There came a knock at the door and an officer entered to

inform von Rintelen in a whisper that the Herr Doktor Freidman would like to see him. Von Papen brightened up. "This is more to my liking," he remarked. "The Doktor is a man of brains."

But the Doktor was in a state of perturbation. It was evidently not the fire bombs he had been manufacturing that had induced his state of alarm, for he at once burst out: "Pardon, Herr Baron, but I must speak to you most urgently. I have heard serious news."

"Go on," said von Rintelen, with a smile. "I live a life of scares and alarms. It is worse than the battle front."

"Does your Excellency think," said the Doktor, wiping the perspiration from his lofty German brow with an enormous bandana handkerchief, "that it is wise to allow these men Hertz and Weidemann to move about our agents obtaining the most confidential information? As your Excellency knows, it is necessary that I get my ingredients in very small quantities from a dozen different places—it is much safer—and from every one of our agents I hear extraordinary stories of the questions these two are asking."

"Why not? They are doing wonders, far more than I ever deemed possible. Besides, they have the authority of the Emperor himself. I dare not go against that."

"I do not like it, your Excellency. They are learning enough to have us all shot or hanged. Cannot you put someone to keep a watch on them?"

Von Rintelen laughed. "You are all getting the same, my dear Doktor. Wherever I go I receive warnings that this American so-called Secret Service is on my track. I do not worry about them; I have too much influence at the White House. Besides," he added boastfully, "there are so many Germans in this country that they will never dare to touch us."

The Doktor went away, still shaking his head, and von Rintelen went on with his work. A stream of people were waiting to see him. Loeffler, a reliable agent who had worked many cargoes through to Germany under the Danish flag, wanted to know if he could spend 100,000 dollars on a shipment of copper which was lying in a Brooklyn warehouse. An out-of-work ship's captain offered to run supplies to the auxiliary cruisers in the South Atlantic, provided the Herr Baron could give him the money to pacify one or two officials who were watching him. One way and another, the Baron had his hands full.

Next morning arrived a letter—at the flat where he passed under the name of Henry B. Jackson—which roused him to a state of great excitement. It was from Weidemann and Hertz, and it said that great events were in the offing.

We have arranged, your Excellency, a gigantic strike which will completely paralyse the sailing of ships to England. We have seen the powerful Union boss Samuel Gompers, who, as your Excellency is aware, holds a position in the industrial world second to none. He is a true son of the Fatherland, and he agrees with us that it is essential that Germany shall win the war at all costs. But, as he truly says, he will probably have to leave America sooner or later, and, that being the case, he insists on being handsomely remunerated for his services.

It will, he says, and we agree with him, be necessary for him to pay large sums of money to other trade union leaders. For 500,000 dollars, to be paid in 1,000-dollar bills, he will call a general strike. We strongly advise your Excellency to accept this offer, which is not likely to occur again. The money must be paid over by hand, and if you agree we should like it sent care of your agent, Joseph Ortweiler, in Detroit. This man has done noble work in the sacred cause of the Fatherland, and on our return we shall report upon him in the most favourable terms.

Von Rintelen sent the money. His colleagues violently demurred at spending such a huge sum, but, as the Baron laughingly put it, what did it matter what went out so long as the perfidious American and the treacherous English were prevented from killing good, honest Germans who had done no harm to anyone. So the 500,000 dollars went off to Ortweiler and von Rintelen patiently waited for the strike to come off. He would have liked to have gone to Detroit himself had it not been for the fact that he was already working twenty hours a day—and also that British and American spies dogged his footsteps wherever he went.

A week went by, and then, to his intense amazement, there walked into his office on Broadway no less a person than Joseph Ortweiler.

"What brings you here?" asked the Baron. "I thought you were busily employed with our friends Hertz and Weidemann. They have sent me a glowing account of your doings. You paid over the packet of money I sent you? It was a very large amount, but I think it worth it."

"I have not seen either of them for several days," said Ortweiler. "They went away, after entertaining me to dinner, your Excellency, telling me they had most important business on hand. Something was going to happen, they said, which would cause a colossal sensation through the entire world. They were very mysterious."

"It is all right," von Rintelen assured his companion. "We are making history. Shortly there shall come something that will teach these Americans, and also the English, a lesson they are not likely to forget."

"No doubt your Excellency is right. The little dark man, who looks like a Jew, hinted that great surprises would be forthcoming before long."

"The little dark man?" exclaimed the Baron, jumping out of his chair. "Who is it you mean? I have sent

no such person. The little one, Hertz, is fair ; he is a Würtemberger. It is the tall one, Weidemann, who is dark. You must be mistaken."

" No, your Excellency, I am not. The little one is dark and his name is Hertz, for the other man called him so. They were very agreeable, and I gave them all the information in my power as your Excellency directed."

" Gott in Himmel ! " shrieked von Rintelen, the veins standing out on his forehead. " Are you sure ? Have you been trapped, you fool ? Do they know what you have been doing—and I also ? " he added as an after-thought.

" Of course, your Excellency," cried Ortweiler, staring at the Baron with frightened eyes.

The Baron collapsed into his chair again.

" Mein Gott ! " he murmured. " You do not know where these men are now ? "

" I do not, your Excellency."

" Then do not seek to find out. You had better disappear for a time, as I am going to do."

" But, your Excellency——"

" There is no ' but ' about it," said the Baron harshly ; " if you do not know now what has happened, you soon will. Hertz and Weidemann have been captured by those damned American Secret Service men."

" American Secret Service ! "

" Yes, fool ! The two men to whom you have given all this money are not the men who called upon me here ! "

" Surely your Excellency is mistaken ? "

Von Rintelen did not bother to reply just then. Instead, he pressed his bell, and rapidly gave some instructions to the man who answered it.

" Get out of here as quickly as you can," he said at last to his horror-stricken visitor. " To-morrow there is a steamer sailing for Holland and I shall be on it. My work here is done."

SECRET SERVICE

SECRET SERVICE

THE dining-room of the luxurious Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York resounded with life and laughter. Mingled with the popping of the champagne corks and the clatter of knives and forks was a buzz of conversation which made your own talk altogether inaudible even to anyone sitting three feet away.

Such a state of affairs was eminently suitable to my self-imposed acquaintance, Mr. Patrick MacGregor, who leant across the table and in his rich Irish brogue seductively set forth the astounding schemes of the Germans to smash the British Empire.

Why he imagined me to be at all sympathetic I could not understand. But a newspaper man very frequently finds himself in strange company. Maybe Mr. MacGregor had it in his mind to utilise my services in the welter of anti-British propaganda that was then flooding half the American Continent. I didn't know ; I just let him talk.

"Ye've never heard a greater idea in this world," said my companion, with his face thrust close to mine. "'Tis all fixed up. There's half a million German soldiers in this country who can't get back to fight, and von Papen has the plan to mobilise them close to the Canadian border and capture all the big cities before them fool British know what has happened. Ay, 'twill be a great day for Ould Oireland." He took a long swig at the tumblerful of champagne that stood at his elbow and looked at me with his appraising black eyes, seeking to discover how I was taking his revelation.

But my face told him nothing. I had not played poker with hard-headed American gamblers for nothing. Besides, a waiter was hovering around, a stout Teuton who evidently knew friend MacGregor. He pretended to be very busy rearranging the table, but I could see his ears were strained to catch a hint of what was being said. MacGregor was too engrossed in his subject to bother about anyone else.

"Them Canadians," he went on, "don't know what's coming to them. They let me go where I like because Oi carry a British passport, but by all the snakes of Oireland they'll wake up one foine day with a German army on top of them. They're full up to the neck with their plans for sending troops to France, the poor boobys. 'Twill not be long before they'll want them back."

I had heard of a good many amazing schemes that were being engineered by the Germans, but this one fairly shook me with surprise. I looked round the dining-room, but the millionaires and their parties were too immersed with their own talk to take any notice of anybody else. The waiter had temporarily disappeared, much to my relief, for one never knew when the Germans would try to "frame" something on you and get you into trouble with the American authorities.

But the big Irishman in front of me cared nothing for prying eyes and ears.

"Half a million of them," he repeated, "and all of 'em trained soldiers. Von Papen is having them mobilised in Chicago and Buffalo and Detroit, and before them half-baked fools in Canada have any idea there's a war on they'll be across the frontier and into Winnipeg and Montreal and Ottawa, showing 'em who's the real boss."

"Yes," I replied reflectively, "it's a good plan. But who is going to arm them? And what is the United States going to do? Uncle Sam's a nasty customer to tackle once he gets going."

"Uncle Sam ! Hell ! What do they care about him ? "

"It's his country," I said.

"Not it," retorted MacGregor. "It belongs to the people who live in it, and there's twelve million Germans living here who own it just as much as anybody else."

He went on to tell me just how the invasion was to be carried out, with an air of conviction which made me wonder whether such an amazing turn of the war might not come to pass. Four armies, of 125,000 men each, were to invade Canada at different points, seize various strategical points, and, like the British forces then fighting to reach Constantinople, sit down in the occupied territory, confident that, while it might be difficult for them to do anything further, it would also be next door to impossible for their adversaries to make a move.

Secret meetings had been held all over the United States to test the feeling of the German reservists who had been unable to return to the Fatherland to fight, and there had been a response which had made von Papen rub his hands with glee. He knew, and MacGregor admitted it, that very few of them were likely to return home alive, but what did that matter ? So long as the Canadian troops were prevented from crossing the Atlantic, von Papen had achieved his object.

"There's just one little flaw in this great scheme," I remarked at the conclusion. "What are you going to arm these men with ? Even you will admit that a soldier must have something to fight with."

MacGregor gave me a pitying smile.

"Do ye not think all that has been arranged ? " he retorted. "Do ye imagine such a great man as von Papen would go into such a plan without knowing what he is doing ? The man has brains, I tell ye, big brains, such as them damfool English friends of yours never dream of." He took another lengthy pull at his champagne,

absent-mindedly changed glasses with me, and proceeded to tell me more.

"Have ye never heard," he asked, "of a lot of rifles this Yankee Government had made a few years ago when they thought they was going to have a war with Mexico? If ye haven't, I'll tell ye they're still in store and still waiting to be used. The boys have had a line on them for a long while past; it's just a matter of buying 'em and you can say goodbye to Canada."

I sat silent. Only a fool would have failed to recognise the cleverness of the plot, for at this particular time the Canadian Expeditionary Force was just beginning to be a real live factor in the war. The whole country was wrapt up in the fighting in Europe, little heeding the danger so close across the frontier. Everywhere, and in all the American newspapers, there were photographs of Canadian troops leaving for the Western Front, but no one appeared to realise that here, right on their own doorstep, was another enemy army, waiting for the signal to open hostilities.

"How do you know you can buy these rifles?" I asked. "Don't you think it's possible the Government might decline to sell them?"

Mr. MacGregor, whose manners, I must say, were not quite worthy of the Ritz-Carlton, spat on the expensive carpet with true Irish abandon.

"The Govinment!" he ejaculated contemptuously. "The Govinment! Ye're not serious, my bhoy, when ye talk about them. Why, von Papen's got at least twenty Congressmen in his pocket! He's paid out, to my knowledge, a million dollars to straighten them? Ye'll hear no word from them. They'll be only too glad to handle the dollars. Fifty bucks apiece is von Papen's price for them guns, in good hard money. It's a godsend to 'em to sell 'em at all."

It was not quite so difficult of consummation as it

seemed. Large numbers of Canadian troops were being sent to France via England, and von Papen had the idea in his mind that the French population would offer no active resistance to an invading German army.

"Yes," I said at last, "but what about the rifles? How do you know you'll be able to get them? If the Government sold them under such circumstances, England would declare war on them to-morrow."

"To hell with England!" retorted MacGregor, who appeared to possess a fine contempt for detail. "Have I not already told ye there's twelve million good Germans in the States? This town's full of them, and Chicago's full of them. If I wanted to do it," he added slowly, giving me a significant look, "I could have ye done in before ye get back to ye're hotel to-noight. So don't start tellin' me anything about the Germans."

Amazing events of which I had heard had already taken place in Canada at the behest of the German Secret Service. Dynamiters had been at work blowing up railway bridges and canals. The Canadian Pacific Railway had been attacked at a dozen different points. Germans travelling in fast cars had crossed the frontier at night, blown up a section of the line, and been back in United States territory before anyone really knew what had happened.

But all this was only a fleabite. Von Papen, working in conjunction with Baron von Rintelen, planned to give Canada a taste of real war. He foresaw, did this arrogant Prussian, a United States entirely under German domination. MacGregor evidently shared this enthusiasm to the full.

"It's just a matter of toime," he boasted, "and all the factories in the States will be run by the Germans. Only let 'em get those rifles and you'll soon see who's boss. Von Papen's got it all worked out. Inside a month, me bhoy, there won't be a cent's worth of stuff

being made in this country for the blasted English." Much to my distress, and also to that of a head waiter who stood by looking him over disapprovingly, he again expectorated on the carpet, and then fixed his eyes on me.

"Are ye interested in what I'm telling ye?" he demanded, "or are ye not?"

"I am—not," I replied; "it's very kind of you to tell me all this, but I don't think you'll get much change out of Canada. Some of those boys are tough nuts, and besides, there's quite a lot of English people in this country. President Wilson won't stand you buying any rifles here, my friend."

"To hell with Wilson!" said MacGregor rudely. "What do we care about him! He won't be asked if he'll sell any guns. They'll be taken whether he likes it or not. Now listen, I'll tell ye something ye've never heard before."

In a whisper, because the head waiter was still standing by, he told me a perfectly amazing story of millions of dollars that had been paid to Congressmen and Senators as bribes. Ever since the outbreak of war, in fact the moment it became known that Canada would be sending troops to the war, von Papen, aided by Boy-Ed, the Naval Attaché at the German Embassy in Washington, had been hard at work on a gigantic plan to invade Canada with a huge German army equipped by United States factories.

There were probably a couple of million Germans who could have been called upon to fight, and if only half of them had responded Canada must remain crippled for the duration of the war.

such as no one had ever known before was rampant in all the big States and even in Washington. The prize was the rifles. There were close upon half a million of them stored away in the Government armouries, and von Papen, according to the egotistical gentleman in front of me, had it all fixed up to buy them for Germany.

The vision flashed before my eyes of the Russian Army fighting battles with nothing but empty rifles ; I could see a German Army in Canada, with no base to fall back on, no food except that which could be looted, no ammunition, desperately fighting its way through enemy country, doomed to destruction.

I am not romancing. It is nothing but the sheer, cold truth that the Germans in the United States planned in 1915 an attack on Canada which must have succeeded if the necessary arms could have been obtained. The people in England have never been told about it, but it was touch and go, dependent entirely on the attitude of the United States Government, whether the plan was not put into execution.

The raising of this vast army of Germans would, of course, have given them complete command of America. Once it was in being, there would be no more supplies for the Allies. There were *turn vereins* all over the States, ostensibly meeting-places of a social character, but in reality well-organised drill-halls where the Germans met and received their secret instructions.

MacGregor's eyes never left my face. As I turned the matter over in my mind, wondering what would happen to me if I betrayed the scheme to my friends of the British Secret Service, I thought of the ruthless von Papen, whom I had met in Washington a few weeks previously. He was not the sort of man with whom one would willingly cross swords ; the man who could cheerfully condemn half a million of his own countrymen to annihilation would not hesitate at one life more.

"MacGregor," I said at last, "what made you think I would be interested in these plots of yours?"

"Do ye want to make money?" retorted the Irishman. "Are ye going to back the winner or not? Before another six months have gone the Germans will be in England and poor Ould Oireland will have her freedom. Oi have their promise."

"Perhaps," I said sceptically. "They'll not have much use for you once you've done your work. Maybe a bullet in the back will be your reward."

Once more the carpet suffered. Mr. MacGregor looked at me pityingly, informed me I had altogether miscalculated his position in the world, and then, impatiently, asked for my decision.

I shook my head.

"Get on with your schemes," I replied. "The day you buy those rifles will be the day that the United States will declare war upon Germany. And if you don't mind, MacGregor, don't come into my hotel again. I think, likely as not, you'll be seeing the inside of a gaol before long."

The big man's face suddenly changed.

"What Oi've told ye is secret!" he hissed at me venomously. "A word in the wrong quarter and we'll have ye as sure as there's a God in Heaven. There's a lot of good Germans in New York ready to do what they're told." He got up, and without bothering to thank me for entertaining him, barged out of the dining-room, knocked three or four astonished waiters spinning, leaving me a prey to no very pleasant thoughts.

Invade Canada, would they? I wondered what their Ambassador knew about it all. There were all sorts of queer stories current about his secret activities. He had a mysterious flat in New York, a place which you entered one way and were shown out another. *No one going in and anybody coming out.* Strange visitors of all nationaliti

called upon him at times he was supposed to be up to his eyes in work at the Embassy in Washington. There were curious tales floating round New York of beautiful ladies of accommodating nature who were seen one day—or night—in the company of Bernstorff's good-looking attachés, and the next day were being escorted round the city by highly respectable Congressmen—gentlemen who no doubt had discreetly left their own wives at home. Some people said it was blackmail ; others, more knowledgeable, perhaps, put it down to nothing but common everyday graft of a new kind.

All through that night I thought over what I should do. Von Papen, I knew, had tremendous schemes in existence for obtaining German mastery in the States. He had limitless money at his command. One of his subordinates, Dr. Albert, the head of the Hamburg-Amerika Line in New York, controlled a small army of spies watching the movement of ships bound for England, while other men were at work all over the country spying upon the munition factories, forwarding information of consignments destined for the Allies—a sleepless force more dangerous than any army in the trenches.

What was going to happen to me if I divulged MacGregor's secret ? Would some German Secret Service agent set upon me when I was least expecting it, or would it come about that one dark night I would unaccountably disappear, as many men had already done since the Germans had openly shown their hands ? I was in bed the following morning, still racking my brains as to what I should do, when a page-boy knocked at the door to say that two gentlemen wished to see me.

"What do they want ?" I asked.

"They won't say, sir."

"English, American, or German ?"

"English, I think, sir."

The events of the night before leapt to my mind.

"Hullo," I thought, "here's trouble! Somebody has seen something."

"Ask them to come up," I said as casually as I could

Two men, with English naval officer written all over them, came in.

"Good morning," they said cheerily, in so friendly a tone that my misgivings vanished immediately. "You won't mind us troubling you so early in the morning?"

"Not in the least," I replied, "what can I do for you? I am at your service."

"Our mission," said the elder of the two men, "is rather a curious one. We wonder whether you would like to tell us something of your guest last night?"

Quick work! New York was more closely watched than I thought.

"You mean MacGregor?" I asked.

"That name will do as well as any other," was the reply. "We know him by a good many more."

"Well," I said, "you probably know as much as I do. The Germans are intending to invade Canada. I've been debating with myself all night whether I should take steps to inform you of what was on foot, but now you have decided the matter for me. You shall be told everything that has taken place. He appeared to think that I might be useful for propaganda purposes, and he told me the Germans had vast sums of money to spend on anybody who could help them."

"Ah," remarked my interrogator, "and did you see anything of the money?"

"He didn't get that far."

"I only asked you," continued my visitor, "because all the time you were talking to Mr. Patrick MacGregor he had a hundred thousand dollars in his pocket."

"The deuce he did!" I exclaimed, "and where is he now, and where's the money?"

Both my callers smiled.

"We can make a pretty good guess where Mr. MacGregor is," replied the man who had not yet spoken, "but we can't tell you anything about the money. Last night, within a few minutes of leaving you, Mr. MacGregor was on his way down to the docks to board a steamer bound for England. He didn't altogether like the idea himself, but I think we successfully persuaded him of its wisdom. Maybe he will reach the other side safely, and maybe not. A German submarine may take a hand in the game, and, if that is so, friend MacGregor will regret more than ever interfering with things that don't concern him."

AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT

AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT

IN one of those absent-minded moments to which the best of us are prone, the illustrious Captain Franz von Papen, Military Attaché and master spy of the German Secret Service in America, so far forgot himself to administer a sound, hearty kick to poor little Heinrich Schnitzer.

Out of such trifling happenings do great events spring. The chief of the spies, being a busy man and at the time also a worried man, probably gave no further heed to the matter. Truth to tell, many things were troubling him. President Wilson had informed his Ambassador that it would be better if he went home. The British Secret Service people had also grown very persistent ; hardly a week passed that they did not unearth some little conspiracy in which he had played a leading part.

The rebellion in India, which was to be his trump card with the War Lords in Berlin, had turned out a miserable failure. Certainly there had occurred in Singapore a mutiny in which a regiment of Baluchis had murdered their European officers ; but within a week the British Raj had come down with a heavy hand and promptly exterminated the leading spirits.

Other equally promising affairs had come to no good end. The many thousands of good English sovereigns which had supplied to trusty Hindu friends had brought no good but evil in their train ; from far-off Rangoon had come word of a wholesale hanging in which some fourteen native agitators, carrying German gold, had played the most prominent part.

But Heinrich Schnitzer ! Who was he ?

but a poor miserable little spy whom the great man employed to run messages and carry communications that could not safely be entrusted to the prying Post Office. Who was he, to come into his office at such a time and demand that he be paid a living wage, instead of a few miserable dollars, when, as he declared, there was no knowing when the police might not catch him ?

"Get out of here, swine !" shouted the Captain. And, as the swine did not remove his obnoxious person quickly enough, he suited the deed to the word, caught Heinrich by the scruff of his neck and threw him outside, with a well-directed kick to expedite his going.

Such happenings were not altogether infrequent at 60, Wall Street, and occasionally, when the Captain found things going badly for him, it was a wonder that he did not throw his stupid hirelings clean out of the window. So nobody took much notice of Heinrich. He had made his exit out of the private door through which the spies departed, but never came.

Heinrich got up and rubbed the afflicted part. "Ah, my good von Papen," he murmured, not too loudly. "You shall pay for this. Too long have I stood your brutal treatment." Slowly he made his way towards the lift, reached the ground floor, and then passed out into the bustling life of Wall Street.

Von Papen, having other things to consider, gave no further thought to his unfortunate underling. Well for him, perhaps, had he instructed one of the numerous spies who hung about his office to see what overtook Heinrich. Both Wolf von Igel and Paul Koenig were in attendance, the latter with a long and circumstantial story of a consignment of dynamite which had fallen into the hands of the American Secret Service men.

"Things are getting dangerous for us, Herr Captain," he said. "This morning, as I came up to your office, two of them were shadowing me. I gave them the slip, of

course, but I do not like the way in which I am followed night and day. They ransack my luggage wherever I go, and I do not know what is going to happen to me from one day to the other."

They went on talking for some time, which was just as well, for had they known what Heinrich Schnitzer was doing they might have bestirred themselves to other and much more serious matters. Heinrich, after fortifying himself with a schooner of lager at Wassendorf's saloon on the corner of Wall Street, had gone into a telephone box where he called up a number and had strange things to say to the person who answered him.

"Would you give two thousand dollars?" he inquired of the man who spoke to him, "for a list of all the German agents in America?"

One may visualise the exultation of a British Secret Service Agent receiving such an offer—if it were genuine.

"Two thousand dollars?" asked Captain Gaunt. "Well, that's a lot of money. Who are you?"

"It does not matter," said Heinrich impatiently. "Have I not in my possession a list of all the spies in America? Do I not know everybody who is employed in such work?"

The voice seemed German.

"All right," said Gaunt, quick to seize the opportunity; "where shall I see you? I'm ready to do business. Did you say a *complete* list of all the German agents?"

To himself, he was saying: "By God, this is a stroke of luck—if it's all right! Two thousand!"

"Two thousand dollars," repeated Heinrich. "It is not so much the money. If I am able to repay this dirty von Papen the debt I owe him the money does not matter. All I want is sufficient to leave New York."

"Very well," said Gaunt. "I promise you that you shall have it. But, mind you, don't try to double-cross me. I shall verify your information before I hand over

the money. You can meet me to-morrow night at Hennessey's place in Brooklyn. You know it?"

"Have I not been there many times?" protested Heinrich. "But you will be very careful, Captain? This Koenig is a dangerous man."

"Ask for Daly when you get there," said Gaunt. "I shall be upstairs. And mind you bring your list with you."

Von Papen's plans weren't going at all well. Stored away in his office at Wall Street was a perfect mass of incriminating documents, sufficient to condemn him for ever more if they fell into the wrong hands. But he didn't know where to hide them. He might have burnt them all, but that would have meant destroying records that might one day be priceless.

Moved by some impulse for which he could not altogether account, he opened his huge safe and looked through some of them. He came across the plan for invading Canada, together with the story of the explosion at Government House, Ottawa. It made him smile sourly, for had the Ambassador sanctioned the scheme, instead of uncompromisingly rejecting it because it was certain to bring the United States into the war, he, Franz von Papen, the head of the German Secret Service in America, would personally have staked his reputation that no more Canadian troops would have fought on the Western Front.

There was Fay's ambitious plan to dynamite all ships sailing out of New York, and also the final blow, when everything else had gone by the board—the instructions

troy every German ship lying in American ports. had already gone out to his agents that if the s declared war on Germany all ships belonging and should be rendered useless.

l what sort of reception he would receive d to Germany. Not too good, if a the

reports he heard were true. Still, he had done his best. He never gave a thought to insignificant little Heinrich, for he employed hundreds of such men, and at the best of times they were only pawns in the game.

But there was certainly great excitement among the officers who ran the British Secret Service in the States. Gaunt, a man not ordinarily given to showing his feelings, went about for twenty-four hours in a state of trepidation which badly affected his nerves. He might be walking into a German trap—and again he might not. Very often had some of von Papen's and Boy-Ed's badly-paid hirelings offered their services to him; all was fair in the great game of war. All he had to do was to satisfy himself that the information was genuine, and then, presto, the enemy was undone.

"Baker," he said over the telephone to the American official who was as eager as he was to unmask the secrets of the German spy system, "I want you to come out with me to-morrow night. I'm meeting someone who's going to sell me the names of all the German spies in America."

"You're doing what?" came an amazed voice from the other end.

Gaunt repeated his information.

"By the twelve apostles," came the answer, "if you can get that you're solving half our troubles! Where are you getting them from?"

"That," said Gaunt, "I don't exactly know. But if you come round to my place to-morrow night about seven o'clock you'll very likely find out. I've got to meet the fellow at eight."

It meant a great deal to him if only he ascertained the names and addresses of all the German spies in America. For one thing, it would be the culmination of his work, meaning as it did that he would probably be able to stop once and for all the numberless catastrophes that were taking place in the munition factories working for

England. He might also be able to stop the many casualties that were taking place with faulty shells that exploded the moment they left the gun's muzzle. No one knew, of course, whether such shells were made by men and women in German pay, but there had undoubtedly been many deaths by such means, and a complete list of von Papen's agents might solve the mystery.

Von Papen also was busy. He had to see the Ambassador in Washington that night and he didn't relish the ordeal. Bernstorff had told him that important documents had arrived from Berlin which it was imperative he should see. But the Captain was already aware that another "strafe" was in store for him, for Boy-Ed, who usually managed to hear what was afoot, had telephoned that very afternoon to warn him that some of the spies in England had been captured and had told things that were going to be difficult to explain away. So, in a very uneasy mood, he called in von Igel and informed him that he would probably be away for a few days.

"The old fool," he explained—and von Igel did not need to be further enlightened—"has sent for me. It may be, Wolf, that trouble is in store for us. I shall not need to tell you to be careful, and, above all, not to leave this place with any papers that may be dangerous. Here is the key, and as you value your liberty do not let it out of your possession."

He went out of the building, aware that Secret Servicemen were following him. But that he did not worry about, for it was part of his life. At Washington, where he found the Ambassador awaiting him with a long face, there was all.

He was able to go on much longer," said Bernstorff. "This Mexican business has stirred up the Government, and besides," pulling out of a drawer a long, typewritten document, "here is a letter from Berlin you may like to read."

Von Papen read it in silence—and it was not palatable reading. Briefly, it set out that the Ambassador, von Papen, Boy-Ed, the worthy Dr. Albert and many others, were a gang of stupid bunglers who had already involved the Imperial Government in one crisis after another, and concluded by saying that the work of the Intelligence Department had better be left to other and more competent people whose brains were on a par with the serious nature of the situation.

“So you see,” said the Ambassador at last, “that something must be done. That office of yours. Is it quite safe? I am terrified to think of what might happen if the Americans should get into it.”

“Von Igel and Koenig are there,” replied the Military Attaché curtly. “They will not hesitate to shoot if necessary.”

“That is exactly what I am frightened of,” said the Ambassador. “You must get your papers away as soon as possible. Burn them so that there shall be no trace. Hardly a day passes without my receiving some complaint about you, and I tell you frankly I cannot stand the strain any longer.”

“It will be all right,” said von Papen soothingly. “To-morrow afternoon I shall return to New York, and at night time, if all is well, everything will be removed. There are, as your Excellency knows, vast sums of money to be accounted for. I cannot possibly destroy anything until I have taken a note of what everything has cost.”

“Very well,” said the Ambassador with a sigh; “I am leaving it to you.”

Von Papen would certainly have hastened back to New York that very same evening if he had known what was taking place there. Had he happened to be in the back streets he might have witnessed the despised Schnitzer creeping into Hennessey's café, looking for the man who was to buy his country's secrets. Even more uneasy would von Papen have been had he been on hand to see two of the biggest men in the American Secret Service follow

Heinrich upstairs to where the grim-faced Gaunt sat waiting like a spider in his web.

It was no time to mince matters.

"Well," said Gaunt abruptly, "I don't know anything about you and I don't want to know. Where's this precious list of yours?"

Heinrich was not altogether a fool. He shook his head and murmured something about wanting his money beforehand. Eventually, after a lot of parleying, he got 500 dollars on account. Then, with much inward trepidation, he handed over a couple of sheets of foolscap on which were written many names.

Captain Gaunt whistled with amazement as he perused it. There was no need for him to question its genuineness, for two years of hunting German spies had told him much. But how had it come into the possession of this disreputable, shivering little German?

"Where did you get this from?" he asked sharply.

Heinrich again shook his head.

"That I shall not say," he replied. "It will be sufficient for our bargain for you to know that you are not being swindled."

Of that, Gaunt was quite certain. There were names of men he had long suspected of being in German pay, big bankers and merchants who should have known better than to be involved in the toils of Secret Service work. Baltimore, Connecticut, Chicago, Detroit, New York itself, San Francisco, practically every town of importance in America had its enemy agent.

One thing was plainly obvious: it would not do to allow the man sitting in front of him to disappear. He went to the door and opened it. Heinrich gave a guilty start when there walked in a couple of burly Americans, whom his experienced eye at once recognised as members of the Secret Service.

"You'd better take this fellow along to headquarters," said Gaunt. "I think he'll be able to tell us something useful."

There was no option about the matter. The four men went downstairs, got into a cab that was waiting, and ultimately pulled up at a tall building which Heinrich dimly recognised as something to do with the police. He did not know what his captors were going to do with him, and on asking Gaunt was gruffly told to shut his mouth till he was ordered to open it. Shivering with fear, he remained silent until he found himself seated in a chair in a big, bare room which fairly reeked of prison.

A shorthand writer came in, also a policeman. Then, and poor Heinrich never forgot the experience for ever afterwards, he was plied with questions. He had to tell what he had done for von Papen, where he had obtained his list of names, to give particulars of the people who came to the office in Wall Street, and, finally, when all self-possession had deserted him, to blurt out that he had been engaged in carrying bombs from the house of the notorious Dr. Scheele in Hoboken down to the docks.

"What do you know of Scheele?" asked Baker sharply.

Heinrich knew quite a lot, but he didn't want to tell it. But he couldn't face the sudden, furious anger that swept over the Americans present in the office. One of them jumped to his feet and caught him by the scruff of his neck, threatening that he would strangle the life out of him if he did not confess all he knew. Vainly did Heinrich attempt to dissemble; the Americans would have none of it, and at last, shaking in every limb, he told the story of the man who made the fire bombs with chemicals that had been bought with von Papen's money.

It was after midnight before they finished with Heinrich, but they did not let him go. Instead, they threw him into a cell and left him shivering with the dread of he knew not what. He prayed that Captain von Papen might never discover what he had divulged, for if he did his life would be worth nothing.

But for the time being, although Heinrich was not

aware of it, other and more important events required attention. Ever since they had seen Heinrich taken away, Gaunt and Baker had been hard at work. A dozen telephone messages went out to people, who seemed to make no objection to being called out in the early hours of the morning. Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, ten, and then eleven o'clock came. As the latter hour struck, Baker rang his bell. In response to his instructions two men came in. The party of four put on their hats and left the building. Gaunt bade them goodbye and said to Baker : " Let me know how you've got on as soon as you can."

Baker nodded and nothing further was said ; no British subject had the right to be present at what was about to take place, and he went on his way, feeling his pocket to make certain his automatic was there.

High up in the lift at 60, Wall Street, went the three Americans. They entered an office, curtly requested to see Herr von Igel, and without waiting for the invitation which they knew would be refused, followed the clerk in to von Papen's room.

Other people, apparently, were expecting something to happen. The safe, the repository of so many secrets, was open. Some of the documents it had held were on the desk, and, if one could judge by external appearances, von Igel was preparing to flit. One look at Baker and his companions was enough for the nimble-witted German. He made a jump for the safe, slammed the door, and was desperately trying to extract from his pocket a bunch of keys when two of the Americans bore him to the floor, clapped a pair of handcuffs on him, and dragged him, cursing at the top of his voice, to a corner of the room. Baker reached for the telephone, gave a number, and on receiving a reply calmly sat down at the sacred desk of von Papen to read at his leisure some of the papers that meant the diplomatic death of the German Military Attaché.

THE SHIP SCUTTLERS

THE SHIP SCUTTLERS

It was winter time in New York. The snow lay deep on the ground and the bitter north-east wind which cut you through to the marrow whistled around the street corners, reminding you that it was no night for any sensible man to be out-of-doors.

But serious business was afoot. Late that afternoon, just as I was about to leave my office, there had come a telephone call from one of the British Secret Service agents in New York to say that I might, if I liked, make one of a party which hoped some time that night to solve one of the most sinister mysteries of the war.

"And mind you come heeled," said my friend warningly. "There'll probably be some shooting."

So there I was, close on the witching hour of midnight, when I should have been comfortably abed, trudging through the snow to a low-down drinking-den on the New York harbour-side, to meet four men, two British and two American, who were on the track of the German saboteurs whose diabolical activities had now been directed to ship scuttling on a wholesale scale.

Panic reigned among the men who go down to the sea in ships—and with good cause. It was bad enough that merchantmen should be torpedoed by the ocean scavengers who mysteriously appeared from beneath the waves and then vanished as silently as they had come; the sailorman took that happening as one of the unavoidable hazards of the war.

But a new and even more unnerving terror had now made its appearance. Ships sailing from New York

and other American ports laden with supplies for the Allies were vanishing, without the slightest trace of their going. Not even an overturned lifeboat could be found to tell the story of what had happened.

It could not have been the U-boats. The Germans had not yet embarked on that ruthless campaign of piracy and murder which might appropriately have been announced by the hoisting of the Jolly Roger, for it was in the year 1916, when they were still arrogantly confident that their armies would carry all before them.

No German warships, with the exception of a few raiders like the *Moewe* and the *Emden*, roamed the seas, sinking, as they were justified by the rules of war, vessels bound for British ports, or, alternatively, carrying cargoes destined for the Allied nations. Even had such ships been at work, their commanders would not have soiled their hands with such cold-blooded murder as was now taking place on the North Atlantic. Great cargo steamers, as well as their crews, set out from the United States and were never seen again.

The shipping offices were at a standstill. Fabulous wages were being offered to men who would sign on, and insurance companies were looking askance at issuing policies almost certain to involve them in a total loss. It seemed certain that German agents were at work and the United States Secret Service went through a harassing time shadowing the spies who haunted the docks night and day. The chartering of ships had assumed the proportions of a gigantic gamble which might make a man a millionaire in a month or a hopeless bankrupt overnight if he took the risk of running uninsured.

And these ships that disappeared so strangely carried some desperate German who was prepared to sacrifice his own life if he could only scuttle the vessel before it reached its destination? It was known to the Federal agents who dogged the footsteps of von Papen and Boy-E

that the two attachés were in the habit of meeting in the dead of night on board one of the big German liners tied up in New York Harbour; what dark plots they were hatching and what men they employed to carry them out could, for the time being, only be surmised.

I reached my destination, a dingy little saloon in one of the back streets running down to the docks which rejoiced in the name of the Emerald Isle. The proprietor himself, a great red-whiskered fellow whose scarred face bore the marks of many a troublesome customer, was, if his accent could be believed, also a son of Erin.

"What are ye after wanting?" he inquired suspiciously as I called him into the passage. The place was full of seamen.

"Green grass," I replied softly, giving him the password of the night.

"Follow me and pull ye're hat well over ye're eyes."

In true conspirator manner I trod on the heels of the big fellow, past a crowd of riotously drunken sailors who were enjoying what would probably be their last carouse, up a flight of dirty, rickety stairs which wound interminably to a floor on the top. A knock at a door and I found myself in the presence of the Secret Service men I had come to meet.

Four more formidable opponents for any spies to encounter could not be found in the whole of the United States. Captain Grayson, a daring British officer who had already been into Germany for the Intelligence Service, Major Mortimer, a huge, hefty fellow better known to the world as one of the greatest tacklers on the football field, two American Secret Service men I knew named O'Reilly and Finucane, were sitting at the table awaiting my arrival.

"Come in," said Grayson cheerily. "We're just about ready to go. We'll have one more drink before we start."

With a bottle of Irish whisky before us, he told me the plans for our momentous evening.

"Yesterday," he began, "one of my spies informed me that a German agent would be going aboard the *Shropshire Siren* to-night. She sails for Liverpool to-morrow night, but she'll be lucky to reach England if we don't find the bombs this fellow intends to plant down in her holds. If what I have been told is true, he's going to put them all over the ship."

"Bombs!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Grayson grimly. "None of your common dynamite or anything like that. They've had a chemist at work for a long while turning out bombs that are burning ships down to the water's edge. We've had our eye on a fellow up in Hoboken for the last two or three months. He's a clever devil and we haven't been able to catch him at it, but to-night something may happen.

"I may as well tell you," he added slowly, "that you're in for a sticky night. The fellow we are after will be armed, and he may also throw something in your face that will leave you without any eyes—or perhaps even a face. So you won't need me to remind you that it will be every man for himself. I'm going to put you in one of the ship's holds with O'Reilly. Mortimer and Finucane will be in the other."

"And you?" I asked.

A ghost of a smile flitted across the tense face of the Captain.

"I shall be wandering around with a pistol in my hand," he said. "We don't know where this fellow is concealed. There's only a watchman on board, and for all we know he may be hidden underneath the coal bunkers. He may be somewhere in the fo'c'sle, or he may be running about like a rat, hiding himself in a fresh place whenever anybody comes near. But wherever he is to-night, I intend to get him."

We drank up our whisky, called the proprietor, and slipped out the back way through a dark and narrow lane that fairly stank of murder and sudden death. I felt in my pocket to make sure that my pistol was there, and followed close on the heels of the other four as they quietly made their way down to the docks. Silhouettes of steamers loomed up into view, but we went on and on for half a mile, until O'Reilly whispered to me that we were near the *Shropshire Siren* and must proceed cautiously.

The wind whistled with stinging force. Whirlwinds of snow blew into our faces, while up above the stars gleamed brightly in a clear sky. Grayson, in charge of the expedition, had made all the plans. Instead of going straight aboard the ship—a fatal mistake in view of the German spies that hung about the docks all hours of the night—he had a small boat in waiting at the bottom of some steps. Silently we crept down the slime-covered way, muffled to the eyes and almost numbed with the piercing cold.

Not a sign of any human being could we see. In complete stillness the two Americans rowed us across the basin to the starboard side of a big steamer, and shipped their oars beneath an iron ladder which reached down to the water. Grayson made the boat fast and then, leading the way, dexterously climbed up the ship's side. One by one we followed him. The decks were all quiet.

"There's a watchman on the other side," whispered Mortimer to me cautiously. "Take no notice of him."

The wind hummed through the ship's rigging with icy blasts that made me long for the comfort of my bed more than ever. But who would miss such a thrill?

"Off you go!" whispered the Captain. "You know the signal. Three blasts when you get him."

Taking me by the arm, O'Reilly led the way down aft, while Mortimer and Finucane made their way to the

forward hold. We were to take our stations below and wait, just wait, until something happened. My heart began to beat furiously.

The Captain disappeared. O'Reilly and I on tip-toe cautiously crept down to the after-hold, felt for the ladder which led to its depths, and went over, O'Reilly, another big husky fellow, going first.

Whew ! It was a nerve-racking business descending into the darkness. We dare not risk a light, but a slight grunt beneath me warned me that my companion had reached bottom. A second or two later I joined him again, and he once more took me by the arm whispering in my ear not to make a sound. We crawled over great cases that grazed our shins until eventually we reached our hiding spot, where we sat down and began our vigil.

It was warm enough in the hold, too warm for our heavy coats. Besides, if the fight we expected came they would be a terrible encumbrance. Silently I proceeded to take mine off and O'Reilly followed me.

The minutes sped by. Not a sound could be heard except the creak of the ship as she swung about in the tide. We could hear each other breathing. Occasionally we heard the noise of a rat scurrying around.

It was blacker than night and so warm that I had the greatest difficulty in keeping awake. We seemed to have been there hours, but when I pulled out my watch and had a look at its luminous dial I was surprised to find we had been there no more than forty-five minutes.

"We want him alive," whispered O'Reilly softly. "If he comes this way I'm going to hit him with this," putting a blackjack into my hands. It was certainly a terrible weapon, a length of rubber about a foot long with a handle to it.

Hours seemed to have gone by. It must have been getting close on three o'clock when suddenly we heard a noise. It seemed as though someone was feeling his

way in the inky darkness of the hold. O'Reilly caught hold of my knee to warn me into silence.

The groping continued. Whoever it was, he must have knocked himself against the sharp edge of one of the cases, for we heard a muttered exclamation in the German language. A thrill went down my spine and I experienced that tight feeling around the heart that comes to any man when death is in the offing.

Silence once again. The man in the darkness, whoever he was, had evidently found the place he sought. He remained perfectly quiet for some minutes; the only noise to be heard—and that, no doubt, was my own imagination—was the thumping of my heart. It seemed loud enough to give warning to anyone so close at hand.

A slight scraping which might have been a rat trying to gnaw its way into wood. We listened intently, and then suddenly, O'Reilly, on his hands and knees, crept in the direction of the sound.

Heavens, what was that? I nearly shouted out as a ship's siren somewhere near by let off a great blast in the stillness of the night. The hooting continued. Great hoarse shrieks drowned the sound of everything that was happening around us. O'Reilly, active as a cat, grasped the opportunity like a flash. Unseen, unheard, he crawled across the hold.

Suddenly there was a flash of light, and in the glare of it, bending down beneath some cases, I saw the figure of a man. It was only for a second; there was a loud shout, and then O'Reilly, like a panther leaping for its prey, made a flying leap on top of the stooping man. I heard a terrific thud and a terrible shriek of pain. Crash! crash! crash! went the blackjack.

I picked up the electric torch O'Reilly had thrown aside, but the combat was over. Lying on his face was an inert mass of humanity, while O'Reilly, breathing

heavily, slowly rose to his feet and grunted out : " That's finished him."

It certainly had. He turned over the man's body, and by the light of the torch I saw a dark little weasel of a man with long, lank hair who looked like death itself. Beside him, strewn all over the place, were steel canisters about a foot long.

Out of his pocket O'Reilly pulled a whistle and blew three blasts, one short and two long. They shrilled out into the night, and in the space of a minute or two we heard the sound of footsteps on the deck above. A voice, Grayson's, called out :

" Is that you, O'Reilly ? What's happened ? "

" I've got him ! " shouted the Irishman, still panting.
" He's down here with his bombs as well ! "

I flashed my torch as the Captain, with Mortimer and Finucane following him, climbed down the ladder into the hold.

" By God ! " exclaimed Grayson as he looked at the capture. " You've done well ! " He picked up one of the canisters and looked at it curiously. " So that's the little game ! "

It was a strange-looking bomb, weighing only a few pounds, and reminded me of nothing so much as the tins used for ordinary household commodities. But it was harder than tin and the top could not be moved.

" Get him up above," said the Captain sharply.
" The sooner we bring this fellow round and find out if there's any more of these fancy contrivances aboard the better. I hope you haven't killed him ? "

" He's all right," said O'Reilly. " I've given too many of these fellows the knock-out to put them to sleep for good. A bucket of water and he'll be jumping about like a fish."

Without an effort, he hoisted the body on his back and ascended the ladder. All was quiet on deck. Not

a soul, apparently, had heard a whisper of the fierce little drama that had taken place. Mortimer and Finucane picked up the bombs, put them in their pockets, and, without a word being said, followed their commander down the side of the ship into the boat that lay bobbing below. The herculean O'Reilly came down last, dropped his burden with a sigh of relief, and sat there panting for breath while we were rowed back to the steps.

Magic had been at work. A motor-car mysteriously made its appearance the moment we reached the pavement. O'Reilly with his victim got inside, accompanied by the Captain and Finucane, while Mortimer and I got in beside the driver. No one was about ; the bitter weather had sent everybody indoors for shelter, and with barely a sound except the swish of the wheels through the deep snow we speeded through the dark and narrow streets into the heart of New York. All the thoroughfares were deserted ; an occasional policeman patrolling his beat who took no notice of us was all we saw. The car went on to a part of New York I did not know, and pulled up at a quiet house almost hidden by trees, where the Captain got out and opened the door.

O'Reilly, carrying the unconscious man like a carcase of mutton, followed him inside. Waiting until we had all entered the house, Grayson carefully shut the door behind us, switched on the hall light, and then went into a large room at the back.

" Throw him down there," Grayson said to O'Reilly. That individual, whose exertions had indeed been superhuman, let his burden slide to the floor face upwards. We crowded around to look more closely.

He was not very well dressed, this scuttler of ships. His shabby clothing appeared to have seen many years of hard wear. But his boots were not those of a working man ; they were thin-soled. Nor did his hands betoken manual labour. Sharp of feature, now

deathly pale, he lay on his back with his eyes closed, a slight heaving of the chest being the only indication that life continued within him. Grayson knelt down beside him and went through his clothing with a practised hand.

But there was nothing of any consequence to be found, no papers or anything to give any information as to his nationality. In one of the side pockets was a big jack-knife and a box of cigarettes. The Captain pulled off the man's coat, ripped open the lining with the knife, but still found nothing. There was no belt such as might hold a clue to the fire fiend's identity.

"Get him upstairs to the bathroom," he said curtly. "We'll soon discover who he is."

Two of us picked the body up by the head and heels and carried it up a flight of stairs. In the spacious bathroom the tap was turned on and our man laid under it. He came back to life with a bound; a sudden gush, and he coughed and spluttered, then gave a loud cry as his eyes opened and he saw around him five men.

"Gott!" he shrieked in a high voice. "What is this? Where am I?"

"You're all right," growled the Captain, pulling him on to the floor. "You're in good hands."

Semi-dazed, and still only half-conscious, the German was taken back into the big dining-room. O'Reilly propped him up in a chair while the Captain, pulling a brandy-flask out of his pocket, forced some of the spirit down his neck. With a deep sigh he slowly resumed his hold of life, and as he did so one could see the fear come into his eyes.

Grayson wasted no time on him.

"Now then," he rapped out, "what's your name and where did you get those things from?"—pointing to the canisters that were now lying on the floor.

The man shook his head sullenly, but made no answer.

"Quick's the word," said Grayson sharply. "If

you can't find your tongue, we'll find it for you." To add force to his words, he carelessly pulled out his pistol. "I'll give you just one minute to make up your mind."

The man in the chair glanced round at us, but saw no hope there. There was a tense silence for a few seconds. Grayson took out his watch.

"It is the Herr Doktor who is to blame," the German whined suddenly.

"The who?" asked Grayson quickly.

"The Herr Doktor."

"I told you so," exclaimed Grayson, turning to O'Reilly. "The sooner we set about him the better. Now," he said to the captive, "you'd better make up your mind to tell us all you know of the Doktor. And, mind you, if you try to lie it will go hard with you. We know all about him."

Half an hour went by, and in that time I heard one of the most amazing stories of the war. There was a chemist in New York whom von Papen had induced to make incendiary bombs so that British and Scandinavian ships should never reach the other side. But the German professed not to know what they contained, and stood his ground, though Grayson alternately cajoled and threatened him. All he could say was that for a consideration he had undertaken to place the bombs on outward bound ships, with the promise of 5,000 dollars for every vessel that disappeared. His name was Karl Schultz; he had been a waiter in a Broadway restaurant until one of von Papen's agents induced him to join the German Secret Service.

"It's no use wasting any more time over him," said Grayson to O'Reilly. "Take him back to the ship and make him show you where the rest of his fireworks have been placed. You know what to do with him. When he has done that, shove him inside until we're ready for him."

O'Reilly and Finucane went off with their prisoner. It was still dark, and the Captain sat without speaking for some little time. I was curious to know what the bombs contained, but I had to wait for two or three hours. In the meantime, a servant brought us something to eat.

The telephone bell in the hall rang. Grayson answered it himself, and I could hear him saying to the caller: "It's all O.K. Come round as soon as you can and bring your tools with you."

"What's up?" I asked him.

"Wait and see. We're going to show you the secret of the ships that have sailed from here and never been heard of again."

There was a ring at the front door. The servant brought in a man with a big leather bag who, with professional dexterity, took out a powerful little steel-cutting saw which he clamped on to the dining-room table. Fascinated, I watched him in silence. Picking up one of the canisters, he asked Mortimer to get him a couple of bowls from the kitchen.

Not a word was spoken afterwards. The new arrival placed one of the canisters under the saw and deftly, as one who had frequently undertaken such tasks, cut off the top. Mortimer stood by to catch the liquid that gradually trickled out. It was a pale yellow.

"If you get any of it on your hands you'll have something to remember," remarked the man with the saw, breaking the silence. "It's sulphuric acid."

It was a strange contraption, this canister. Inside, about half way, was a division, also made of steel. But

canister upstairs and put it under the tap as directed, to wash everything out, and then came back for an eyep opener in the gentle art of winning wars.

"This," said the Captain, holding up the canister like a schoolmaster, "is one of the methods our friend the enemy has adopted since he came to the conclusion that the war wouldn't be over as soon as he hoped. The top of it contains, as you know, sulphuric acid, or, as it is sometimes called, vitriol. The bottom part is filled with chlorate of potash.

"An ingenious German gentleman whose knowledge of chemistry is, I must admit, far superior to mine, conceived the idea of making an incendiary bomb which would take at least three days to burn through. You will see the wisdom of that," he remarked, turning to me. "Three days is just a nice time for a ship to get 600 miles out into the Atlantic Ocean.

"The two ingredients which would serve his purpose were sulphuric acid and chlorate of potash. It would probably take the acid at least three days to eat through the steel divider that you see, and when it had done so it would set fire to the chlorate of potash and cause a combustion that no water in the world would put out. The potash would spread like wildfire, and in a very short space of time take complete hold of any place where it was burning. Half a dozen of these bombs scattered over a ship would burn it down to the water's edge; and that, gentlemen," he concluded, "is the reason why so many boats have never been seen after leaving these shores."

I was saying goodbye to the captain at the front door, feeling slightly dazed, when he added just one more thing.

"You can tell them at home," he said, "that there will not be so many ships disappear in the future. By the time O'Reilly has done with his man, and by the time I have finished with the Herr Doktor, the fire bug business will be out of date."

A TALE OF TWO FACES

A TALE OF TWO FACES

FORTUNATE indeed is the man who does not possess a double. When one thinks of the malevolent fate that overtook poor Adolf Beck, tragically condemned by stupid officialdom not once, but twice, for despicable offences he could not possibly have committed, you must thank your lucky stars that your face is your own.

If your face should be your fortune—and thereby keep you poor all your life—there is no need for despair. When you read the story of Adolf Beck you will probably come to the conclusion that it is infinitely better to be the sole owner of the copyright of the physiognomy that the Lord has inflicted upon you than to have walking about the world another edition of yourself afflicted with habits obnoxious to the rest of humanity.

Just over fifty years ago, in that haunt of the morbid commonly known as the Old Bailey, there appeared in the dock one day rather a prepossessing sort of individual. He was indicted in the prosaic name of John Smith, but the police officer who had charge of his case said that the prisoner was really an Austrian Jew who had been born Vilboir Weisenfells. Be that as it may, there was no question that the culprit was a good-looking young fellow with more of a penchant for the dangerous rôle of Don Juan than honest work.

The Court, full of bewigged lawyers and highly interested spectators, had no idea, naturally, that they were the actors and the audience of what was subsequently destined to be a calamitous case for another man altogether. At first sight, it appeared to be but one of those

contemptible frauds so frequently practised upon women who are loth to invoke the assistance of the police.

"I am a married woman living apart from my husband," said Louisa Leonard. "While walking near Charing Cross on April 4, the prisoner entered into conversation with me. He made an appointment to call at my house in Great College Street." From which it may be inferred that the lady depended for her livelihood upon what is usually known as the oldest profession in the world.

Be that as it may. The episode developed a few days later, when Louisa's new-found friend called upon her, made himself extremely agreeable, and mentioned, off-handedly, that he was a peer of the British realm, no less a person indeed than Lord Willoughby.

"I've taken a very great fancy to you, my dear," remarked his lordship affably. "I've got a nice little maisonette in St. John's Wood. What do you say to going there to live? I'll look after you all right; you'll have plenty of money and as many servants as you want."

The lady, no doubt, looked around her somewhat shabby apartments in the dingy purlieus of Great College Street—which, after all, is nothing but Camden Town—and rapidly came to the conclusion that the aristocratic seclusion of St. John's Wood would suit her tastes much better.

Modestly casting down her eyes, she murmured that it would be delightful; she would take up her abode in the maisonette as soon as his lordship wished. The episode developed a stage further by the noble caller showing the lady-love's jewellery and contemptuously declaring that it was shocking rubbish.

"I'll get you something better," he promised, at the same time slipping a ring into his pocket so that he could obtain the proper size. He also took possession of a pair of ear-rings which he said he would have copied in diamonds and gold.

Time slipped on, and just as it was getting near four o'clock, his lordship, anxious to be off, took a cheque-book from his pocket, filled in a form for £13 10s., and told Louisa to take it to a bank in Lombard Street. Even that did not exhaust the full measure of his generosity ; he wrote out an order on a firm of Regent Street dress-makers to supply Louisa with whatever apparel she wanted.

They went downstairs, Louisa, her friend Emily Ashton, and the warm-hearted Lord Willoughby. It suddenly struck his lordship when he reached the street that he had sent his cab away and had no loose change.

" How much money have you got on you, my dear ? " he inquired of the fair Louisa. " Just let me have it."

Louisa may have thought it rather strange ; at any rate, she produced her poor little purse containing a paltry fifteen shillings and handed it over. His lordship carelessly opened it, emptied the money in his pocket, threw the empty purse into the gutter, called a cab into which he climbed, and waved them an affectionate farewell.

There is no need to dwell upon the painful events which occurred immediately afterwards. The bank cashier to whom the cheque was presented shook his head when he saw it, went into the manager's room, and came back with the information that no such person as Lord Willoughby had an account at that particular bank. Dismayed, but not altogether discouraged, the two fair females tried their luck at the dressmakers', where a similar fate awaited them.

One does not require much imagination, therefore, to realise that there were two very indignant ladies walking about London for the next few weeks following, and the scene that occurred on April 19 in that busy centre of polyglot democracy, Tottenham Court Road, when they suddenly espied the missing lord, can be dealt with in dramatically brief fashion.

"How are you, my lord?" inquired Louisa with strident sarcasm. "I've never had what you promised."

His lordship, to give him his due, didn't bat the proverbial eyelash.

"Get off out of it," he replied with plebeian promptitude. "I've never seen you before and I don't want to see you again. Clear off, or I shall call a policeman."

The usual London crowd gathered, and Louisa thereupon informed all and sundry that *she* would be the one to call a policeman. And she was; but before the arm of the law could make its appearance his lordship thought discretion the better part of valour and jumped into a passing cab.

An onlooker took a hand in the proceedings, as onlookers frequently do. He caught hold of the cab-horse's head, and while the confusion was at its height his lordship precipitately descended from the cab at the other side, only to fall bang into the arms of a constable.

An important person, this officer, though to be sure it was not until twenty years later that the significance of his part in the drama of Adolf Beck came to a head. Spurrell was his name, official number ER25, a typical member of the Metropolitan Police. Gravely, full of judicial impartiality, he heard the story the women had to tell, and then informed his lordship that he must come to the police station, where he would be charged.

It would seem that the prisoner had been making quite a practice of robbing trusting young females. Quite a number of them came forward to identify Lord Willoughby as a man whose specious tongue had persuaded them into parting with trifling little sums of money and jewellery. Hence the scene in the Old Bailey, where famous lawyers such as Forrest Fulton and Montagu Williams exhausted their eloquence debating the virtues and dangers of identification.

The twelve good men and true had no doubts; they

brought in their verdict of guilty, and the judge on the Bench passed sentence of five years' penal servitude. There, for the time being, we may leave this particular case and journey to Norway, to the little village of Christiansund, where there lived Captain Iver Beck, a sailorman who had born to him a son whom he named Adolf.

The early life of Adolf Beck afterwards played a considerable part in the tragedy which overshadowed his later years, so it may be as well, perhaps, to recapitulate the adventures he underwent. Shipping before the mast as a seaman, he reached Valparaiso in Chili, remained there for some years, and then turned up at Bristol, where he took a berth in a merchant's office and learnt to speak English.

He went back to South America, became involved in several of the revolutions common to that part of the world, took up a guano concession for a group of islands in the Pacific, fought hard and long for such prizes as a foreigner could wrest from the slothful Chilian, and gradually got on his feet. There is no doubt whatever that he was in South America from 1868 to 1885, a fact which is of vital importance in the events to be disclosed.

When 1885 came, Beck took up his residence in London, where for ten years he did a considerable amount of business with his different South American properties. In the course of his life in London, he obtained a concession to build a Spanish railway, and being unable to find the necessary large amount of money, he got into touch with a firm of bankers who promised to supply the capital he wanted.

Bad luck overtook the venture. Beck discovered that the bankers were nothing better than a gang of adventurers. Anxious to get rid of them as speedily as possible, he made them an offer to forgo any rights they possessed ; all he received was a demand for the

return of the money they had paid him for their share of the concession.

His financial affairs, then, were in this state in December, 1895, when he was living in a flat in Victoria Street, Westminster. He had recently moved there from a hotel where he had resided, on and off, for some considerable time. On the evening of December 16, while standing outside his flat, a woman came out of the gloom and said to him, without any preliminary remark at all: "You scoundrel, what have you done with my watch?"

Strange words to have addressed to you, even in London, where the inconceivable happens every hour of the day and night. Beck, dumbfounded, imagined he had a lunatic to deal with.

"Madam," he replied, "you are surely mistaken. I have never seen you before."

But the woman—like so many of her sex—persistently refused to believe she could be wrong. She began to get noisy, until poor Beck, the centre of an ever-growing crowd, said: "I'll soon stop this. I'll get a policeman, and give you into custody for creating a disturbance."

Not the behaviour of a man with a guilty conscience! Had Beck been the type of individual who had indeed stolen a woman's watch, he would most likely have slunk off into one of the side streets of Westminster. That fact, however, does not seem to have impressed itself upon the authorities when it came to a question of prosecuting him.

A policeman hove in sight and to him Beck explained the situation. Then up came the woman, and the constable did the only thing he could—he took Beck and his accuser to Rochester Row police station hard by, where, in the sanctity of the charge-room, the woman, who gave her name as Ottilie Meissonier, positively identified Beck as the man who had robbed her of her watch. Excitedly, and seething with anger, she told the stolid station

sergeant that she would take the responsibility of charging the bewildered Beck.

We all dream terrible moments ; it may be that we are lying on a railway line awaiting the roar of an oncoming train, or perhaps we are drowning, and in our sleep we die a thousand deaths awaiting the end. Visualise, then, the terrible feelings of Adolf Beck, thrust into a police cell, accused of a crime of which he was absolutely innocent ! Such things have happened before, and will continue to do so. So long as the police are compelled to rely on the present loose system of identification.

With nothing but the prospect of a satisfactory explanation in the morning to console him, he sat in his cell filled with gloom, when suddenly the door opened. Eagerly he jumped up, thinking his captors intended to release him, but, horror of horrors, it was the station sergeant come to tell him that there were two other women who also wanted to charge him with stealing !

"Are you all mad ?" cried poor Beck distractedly. "I have never stolen a thing in my life. This is frightful. What am I to do ?"

"You'd better wait until the morning," said the sergeant. "If you are as innocent as you say you are it will soon be put right. We can't help ourselves here ; these women say you are the man who has robbed them, and until you get before the magistrate there's nothing you can do.

"We'll get you a good solicitor in the morning," he added kindly. "Anything you want to eat now you can have. Don't worry yourself."

Well-meant words, but not much consolation. However, Beck, the participant in a good many South American revolutions, had endured captivity before then, and so, making the best of a bad job, he laid down on the rough bed provided for him anxiously to await the proceedings of the morrow.

Beck requested that a solicitor named Baker whom he employed in his business should be brought to Court to defend him. He was informed, after a delay of an hour or so, that Baker could not spare the time. Shortly afterwards there came to his cell a solicitor's clerk, who told him that his master was one of the regular men at that Court, and had a great deal of influence with the magistrate.

"Just you leave it to him," added the youth. "He'll soon get you out of your troubles."

The time came for Beck to be placed in the dock, and there he found himself charged with stealing various articles of jewellery from three different women, all of them belonging to what is commonly described as the unfortunate class. It would appear, also, that he, the prisoner, had been indulging his imagination to the extent of calling himself the Earl of Wilton, while to Otilie Meissonier he had told even more plausible stories—that he was a cousin of the Marquis of Salisbury, and the possessor of an income of something like £185,000 a year.

It is highly important that the *modus operandi* of the accused man should be set out. All the women he was charged with robbing said that he had given them cheques on non-existent accounts, after which he had taken his departure bearing with him watches, rings, and other odds and ends of bijouterie dear to the feminine heart. Otilie's watch he was going to have set with diamonds.

Otilie herself, a very voluble Frenchwoman, identified Beck by a scar on his face, and in the light of other evidence that was put forward the magistrate curtly announced that the prisoner would be remanded without bail. One

could not blame him; he had already been given a

So there it was; the distracted Beck, that he had heard aright, found himself in the dock and put back into his cell. He was by no means impressive individual,

whose demeanour indicated that he didn't in the least believe his client's innocence. Beck, by now thoroughly terrified, was driven off late that afternoon in the Black Maria as a "remand."

No words can adequately convey the agony of mind the wretched man felt as he lay in Holloway Prison for a week asking himself whether it was not all some horrible nightmare. He again saw his solicitor, revealed to him that he had been in London for something like ten years leading a comparatively humdrum commercial life, and passionately protested that he was anything in the world but a predatory Don Juan.

His case came on again, when there were other charges to face. More women came forward to complain that he had robbed them, and all of them told the same tale—that he had given them worthless cheques and walked off with their jewellery. The names of these deluded females do not greatly matter; it is sufficient to say that Adolf Beck, almost off his head with worry and fright, was hardly in a fit state to be dealt with. Nor was he assisted in any way by the attitude of his lawyer; that person appears to have been entirely submerged beneath the overwhelming flood of evidence that was brought against the prisoner.

The police officer in charge of the case produced one day a photograph which he showed to Beck.

"Do you know who that is?" he inquired.

Beck looked at it and shook his head.

"Why," remarked the officer, "it's you. It's no use our denying it."

Beck, as warmly as he could, protested that it was not. Then the officer told him to take off his coat. Beck, anxious only to establish his innocence, pulled it off, revealing as he did so a scar on his right arm.

"Ah, I thought so," said the officer triumphantly. "You're the man we want."

But even worse was to come. The last time he appeared before the magistrate there was put into the witness-box Police-Constable Spurrell, who without any hesitation informed the magistrate that he identified Adolf Beck as a man known to the police by the name of John Smith. He, Spurrell, had arrested him nearly twenty years before, and had no doubt whatever that he was the same man who had been convicted of offences similar to those with which he was now charged.

What could the magistrate do ? Beck's lawyer, upon whom he had depended to obtain complete proof of his innocence, warned him that he would have to go for trial, and that it would be better for him to reserve his defence until he appeared in the dock at the Central Criminal Court. When Beck heard Spurrell state that he had arrested him close on twenty years before he felt assured of an early release, because he anticipated no difficulty whatever in being able to prove that he was living in South America at the time of his alleged previous conviction.

Such an alibi, of course, did not disprove the present charges against him, though it certainly did exonerate him from being the John Smith who had already served a term of penal servitude for offences now being alleged against *him*. But he felt—and quite rightly—that if he could prove beyond all shadow of doubt that he was not in the habit of preying on women, then the case against him would at once fall to the ground. He failed to take into account the almost unbelievable combination of circumstances that arose like a spectre in the night to confront him.

Beck's case had not then assumed the dimensions of a *cause célèbre*. It is beyond question that his solicitor, and also the eminent K.C. who was briefed to defend him at the Old Bailey, Mr. Charles Gill, possessed

no deep-seated doubt about his guilt. Probably both of them thought that a man who would rob women in circumstances such as Beck was accused of doing—and knowing also that the police believed him to be identical with Vilboir Weisenfells, alias John Smith—would naturally affirm his innocence. Gill himself revealed his ideas about the matter when he said to the prisoner in the dock :

“ What on earth have you been robbing all these women for ? I shall defend you as best as I can, but if you will take my advice you will plead guilty.”

Could any man have been in worse plight ? Believed by everybody guilty, even by the lawyers defending him, confronted by overwhelming testimony that he was the despicable thief alleged by the witnesses for the Crown, he might well have asked himself whether he did not in actual fact possess a dual personality, that he was indeed a Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in real life. And if it required one more link in the irresistible chain of coincidence which seemed to be dragging him down to the depths, it was to be found in the fact that the judge who had to try him was the self-same man who had prosecuted John Smith twenty years before ! That, surely, was the unkindest blow that Fate could possibly have dealt him.

As in a dream, Beck heard counsel for the prosecution set out his case. He heard it said in cold, dispassionate tones that it was beyond dispute that all the thefts had been committed by one and the same man, and that really the only issue which the jury had to decide was whether Adolf Beck was that man.

One by one the Crown's witnesses went into the box and related how they had been robbed. In almost every instance the method had been identical, the only exception of note being the case of another victim, who had been robbed of property which she valued at £150.

There was also produced in evidence cheques which the thief had given to his various victims, and a well-known handwriting expert, the late Mr. T. H. Gurrin, testified that the writing on these cheques was precisely similar to that of John Smith who had been convicted in 1877. One may remark in passing that the evidence of all these so-called experts in handwriting is open to the gravest possible doubt. Time after time has it been proved that the accidental resemblance of a letter here and there occurs so frequently as to make it worthless when a man's liberty—and sometimes his life—may be at stake. It was clearly proved subsequently that Beck's handwriting was semi-illiterate; he had received no education worth speaking of, whereas the man who had been convicted in 1877, and the man who gave so many women valueless cheques in 1895, wrote a hand that betokened quite an appreciable amount of culture.

The contention of the Crown was, of course, that Beck was identical with John Smith, although one might naturally think that his lawyers would have put forward specimens of his handwriting to prove that he could not possibly have written the cheques which he gave to the women who were now appearing in Court against him.

Against this, there required to be explained away the sinister coincidence that, according to the Crown, Adolf Beck had described himself to Mrs. Townsend as Lord Winton de Willoughby. It proved nothing, of course, but it certainly did indicate, if Beck was indeed the man who had robbed her, that he was John Smith; the similarity of the imposture was much too strong to be disbelieved.

Other evidence, strongly detrimental to the prisoner, was put forward. A Covent Garden hotel-keeper named Brown told the Court that Beck was indebted to him in the sum of £1,100, plus a further £300 for unpaid board and lodging. Why evidence such as this should have been

permitted by the judge is a mystery ; it certainly gravely damaged the unfortunate prisoner's case, making it appear that he was indeed nothing but an adventurer living on his wits as best he could.

Naturally, it was the identification by one after another of the women who had been robbed which sealed Beck's fate. Whether or not he was John Smith had no real bearing on the case then before the Court, though it is impossible to doubt the prejudicial effect of the testimony given by the policeman Spurrell, who said he recognised in Beck the man who had been sentenced in 1877.

By the time Mr. Charles Gill had begun the defence there was no mistaking the public interest in the case of Adolf Beck. A Court crowded to suffocation listened in tense silence as the celebrated K.C. pleaded that Beck was the victim of mistaken identity, a man whom it was sought to convict on the evidence of a number of infuriated women who had seen him for but a very brief period.

Witnesses were called by Mr. Gill to state that the prisoner was in South America at the actual time when John Smith was serving his sentence for the conviction of 1877. A tailor who had supplied him with clothes swore that none of the suits he had made resembled those Beck was supposed to have been wearing when he had committed the thefts for which he now stood charged.

Could any man in this world be faced with a more awful plight ? Identified by ten different women, damned by a handwriting expert, sworn to by a police officer who had not seen John Smith for nearly twenty years, tried by a judge who thought he had prosecuted him the same time previously, defended by a man who believed him guilty—what wonder if the unfortunate Adolf Beck had not thrown up his hands in despair and cried aloud : " I am guilty " ?

To his eternal credit, he never lost hope. When,

after a most destructive summing-up from Sir Forrest Fulton, the jury came back with a verdict of guilty, and the judge passed sentence of seven years' penal servitude, Beck must have thought that it was indeed the end of all things for him. But instead of crying out to Heaven for justice, he gripped the rails of the dock agitatedly, and said : " I am absolutely innocent, my lord," and was then taken away by the warders, leaving behind him not a soul who did believe him to be not guilty.

Although no particular purpose will be served by dealing at length with Beck's ultimate fate, it might be as well, perhaps, to recapitulate, if only briefly, the story of the indomitable efforts he made to establish his innocence. When he had donned the garb of a convict and found himself in the company of the " old lags "—which was his fate as an alleged previously convicted man—he never relaxed in his attempts to prove that he could not possibly be John Smith. By ceaseless questioning among his fellow-convicts he ascertained that John Smith was a Jew who, like all of his race, had undergone the initiatory operation of the Hebrew religion.

Beck, not being a Jew, had not been circumcised, and he at once petitioned the Home Secretary for his immediate release. Day after day he waited for the liberty that never came, and he afterwards related that it did not occur to him that he was convicted, not on the fact that he was supposed to be identical with John Smith, but because whether he was Smith or not, he had been identified as the man who had robbed ten women in London in the year 1895.

It must have been purgatory to the unfortunate man, toiling away in the quarries of Portland serving a sentence which was an outrage on the name of justice. He even established the fact that the scar on his arm, which was alleged to be identical with the one possessed by John Smith, was altogether different. But that did not secure

his release, for precisely the same reason mentioned in the previous paragraph. The Home Office authorities were adamant in refusing to believe that all the Crown witnesses could have been mistaken.

And so the years rolled on until Beck had served his sentence minus the remission to which his good conduct entitled him. Then the gates of the prison opened out for him—penniless, friendless, with hardly a soul in the world to care what happened to him.

It would be altogether untrue to state that he was the victim of a conspiracy. The women who professed to identify him undoubtedly did so in the belief that he was the man who robbed them, and one could hardly find it possible to think that the police officer Spurrell maliciously and wilfully testified that he was John Smith without really believing it.

When Beck came out of prison he at once set to work to establish his innocence. He had no money, but with the aid of people who were convinced that he was a disgracefully wronged man, he proceeded to search for the principal witnesses at his trial. He found Mrs. Townsend, told her who he was, and so successfully persuaded her of her mistake that she signed a declaration acknowledging it. He also got into touch with a man named Ruff, who knew John Smith well, and could positively affirm that Adolph Beck did not resemble him in the least. But all the evidence he was able to collect proved utterly useless in convincing the Home Office that a terrible injustice had been done. Three years passed by. Beck remained in London, hoping against hope, heroically fighting to clear his character. Then, in April, 1904, nearly three years after he had been released on ticket-of-leave, there happened something which appears almost incredible. He was arrested and charged with having committed similar offences to those for which he was sentenced in 1896 !

One can now hardly believe it to be true. Except for the fact that no one, apparently, but a few friends believed in his passionate protestations of innocence, there was not a soul in London to lend him a helping hand, and one can hardly wonder, therefore, when Scotland Yard received complaints of women being victimised by a man who answered to the description of Adolf Beck, that they should take him into custody and again completely ignore the possibility of having got the wrong man.

Beck's agony of mind beggars description, and it was in a state of semi-lunacy that he was brought up at the Central Criminal Court to be tried by Mr. Justice Grantham. He had no money worth speaking of ; the solicitor who had been entrusted with his defence declined to brief counsel without the necessary funds. At the last minute, however, pity overcame him. A barrister was put up to defend the unfortunate prisoner, but he was not aware of the fact that Beck had by then conclusively proved that he could not possibly be the John Smith convicted in 1877.

Worse still, an application to have the trial postponed was refused on the ground that important witnesses for the prosecution were about to leave England. Counsel for the defence went into Court ignorant of the fact that both the Home Office and the prison authorities knew full well that Adolf Beck was not John Smith. All he could

There it was. The case went its full course and Beck was convicted. But before the judge could pass sentence, Beck stood up in the dock and cried out that he was as innocent then as he was in 1896. In all probability Mr. Justice Grantham did not believe him, but he said: "If what you say is true, you have been the victim of the most terrible mistakes. I am going to postpone sentence upon you while I make further inquiries."

Beck was taken back to prison, and the medical officer of the gaol was instructed to find out as far as possible whether Beck's story of the circumcision was right.

Unfortunately, however, the prison authorities appear to have attached no importance whatever to the matter. The judge was informed that there was no doubt at all that Beck was guilty of the offences for which he had been convicted a second time, as he was also guilty of the charges laid against him previously. Beck was notified that he would appear at the next sessions to receive sentence.

Then, at long last, providence intervened. While Beck was awaiting his fate, practically demented at the thought of what lay before him, John Smith himself fell into the hands of the police! Women who had been robbed in precisely similar fashion to that for which Beck had been twice convicted unhesitatingly identified him. The women who had been concerned in the conviction of Beck were brought forward and gave it as their opinion that Smith was actually the man who had committed the offences for which the unfortunate Beck had suffered.

It would take a very long time to relate in full the tremendous public indignation that was aroused when it became generally known that an innocent man had already served seven years' penal servitude for the crimes of another. Beck, of course, was immediately released. A Committee of Inquiry was appointed to make a full

investigation into this tragic miscarriage of justice. Severe strictures were passed upon the Home Office officials and the prison authorities responsible, while the conduct of the judge who had tried the unfortunate Beck in 1896 also came in for strong criticism.

It was recommended by the Committee that Beck should receive a full and unconditional pardon—though why a man should be “pardoned” for crimes he had never committed was an anomaly which the Committee suggested should be remedied by the quashing of the conviction, and entering an acquittal in the records of the case.

Beck, a broken man, received compensation of £5,000. No sum of money could properly atone for the wrong he had suffered, but he accepted it, thankful, no doubt, for the small mercies of an erring officialdom.

The Committee’s observations on the people responsible for what they described as a “terrible calamity” are worth giving: “He was believed by the prosecution to be Smith, the ex-convict. When convicted he was assigned by the prison authorities the letter and number by which Smith had been designated; and it was not until the re-arrest of Smith after Mr. Beck’s second conviction that it became known to the police, the Public Prosecutor, the judges, or anyone concerned in the case, that there was in existence evidence conclusively negating the identity of Smith and Beck. And yet this evidence had been in existence since 1879. . . .

“Though mistaken identity was the root of all Mr. Beck’s misfortunes, though it had never occurred to anyone concerned in the prosecution that he was any other person but Smith, yet when it had been conclusively proved to the Home Office in 1898, as the result of their inquiries addressed to the prison authorities, that Mr. Beck was not Smith, he was nevertheless allowed to serve out his term, and no answer was given to his petition,

except that he was accorded a new number and the mark indicating a previous conviction was withdrawn."

One may leave the matter there, sympathising with the man who had fallen a victim to a chain of circumstances and a carelessness which, happily, is not likely to be repeated. Not long after the Beck case, Sir Edward Henry, then the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, brought the fingerprint system of identification into existence. It would not be possible now for any man previously convicted to be confused with another, so that, whatever Beck may have suffered, he has at least brought about a security for which we may all be truly thankful.

THE MURDERER AND THE MIRACLE

THE MURDERER AND THE MIRACLE

HAVE you ever been to Babbacombe Bay ? It lies just outside the pleasant Devonshire seaside town of Torquay, a stretch of blue sparkling water which makes a vivid contrast with the dull red of the cliffs surmounted by the soft green of the fields above.

It isn't a spot, certainly, you would believe to have been the scene of a terrible tragedy, which in its turn gave place to another drama the like of which has never been known in English history. Who could imagine, indeed, that such a romantic little haven as Babbacombe Bay, which throughout its entire existence had never known anything more exciting than the visit of an occasional smuggling gang from France, should suddenly flame forth into world-wide notoriety, all because a sullen lout of a boy should resent losing sixpence a week ?

To reach Babbacombe Bay you must laboriously descend the long winding paths from the precipitous cliffs above, carefully picking your footsteps else you tumble headlong down on to the shingly beach below. But, once having reached the bottom, you would say to yourself, as you espied the few little homely dwellings around, that here in Babbacombe Bay was to be found a spot where you could live at peace with the world.

So thought Miss Mary Keyse, who inhabited a comfortable little rustic cottage right at the bottom of the cliffs which she called The Glen. It was a picturesque retreat, the thatched roof of the cottage lending a rustic atmosphere to what otherwise appeared to be a lonely and weird spot for an old maiden lady to live.

Miss Keyse, 68 years of age, found no need for worry in being thus cut off from the society of her fellow-beings. She had ample means, and with her two servants, Jane and Eliza Neck, who had been with her for forty years, she carried on a quiet, uneventful existence, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

But there was another woman in this sequestered little Devonshire cottage, one who, indirectly, was the cause of the dire tragedy that came upon The Glen. Elizabeth Harris she was called, pretty, empty-headed, continually in a state of rebellion, sighing, no doubt, for the lovers that other girls knew. That, however, has nothing to do with the story at present, which opens on the day when Elizabeth went to her mistress pleading with her to take back into her employ John Lee.

Years before, the boy, who was her half-brother, had worked at The Glen, but he had drifted away, dissatisfied with his prospects, and returned to his half-sister when the want of food and lodging compelled him to swallow his pride, begging that she would intercede with Miss Keyse so that he might at least have a roof over his head.

The kind-hearted old lady had her misgivings that John would ever settle down again to life at The Glen, but she told him that for the time being he could live there, do odd jobs, and receive in return the nominal wage of half-a-crown a week. No money, certainly, for a boy verging on manhood, but, as the old lady candidly told him, she did it purely out of kindness.

employ him. But instead of taking this admonition to heart, his behaviour grew infinitely worse. He neglected his work, grumbled day and night, until at length the sisters Neck went to their mistress and warned her that John Lee was fast becoming a nuisance about the place.

"I am sure I don't know what I am to do with you, John," said the old lady when she called Lee before her. "Your conduct is worse than it was before you went away. I am going to reduce your wages to two shillings in the hope that you will learn to behave yourself. If that does not bring you to your senses then I shall have to send you away altogether."

Pitiful punishment to impose in such a case! The old lady did it merely thinking to cow the boy into some sort of submission; instead of which she changed sullen dissatisfaction into brooding vengefulness. Lee said nothing further to his mistress. He went about his duties again, while all the time there was surging within him the savage desire for the life of his poor, unsuspecting mistress. Nor did he hide the feelings that dominated him day and night. He told all the tradespeople who came to The Glen:

"I'm going to get out of this as soon as I can. Fancy me, twenty years old, working for two shillings a week! The old skinflint ought to be dead!"

The postman, to whom he confided his troubles one day, asked him what he would do if Miss Keyse refused to give him a character.

"Do!" exclaimed Lee violently. "I'd burn the place to the ground and her with it!"

The postman did not take him seriously; he went on his way, telling Lee to remember that he had left The Glen before and might not find it so easy as he thought to get another situation.

Much the same thing happened with his half-sister.

Mumbling and grumbling about his wages being reduced to two shillings a week, he told her that if there wasn't a change soon, someone at The Glen would be sorry. Elizabeth took her half-brother no more seriously than the postman had done.

The weeks went on and the winter time made its appearance. Life at Babbacombe Bay grew quieter than ever. On the night of November 15, Miss Keyse summoned her little household to evening prayers as usual, Elizabeth Harris being already in bed with a headache. That, however, did not disturb the even tenor of The Glen. Prayers were said, and the three servants present, Jane and Eliza Neck, as well as John Lee, were sent off to bed. Silence soon descended upon the house.

It must have been somewhere about three o'clock in the morning that Elizabeth Harris woke up out of her sleep with the sensation of something being wrong. There was an acrid smell in her room which made her cough incessantly. For some time, perhaps ten minutes, she imagined she must be dreaming. But the smell got worse, and with a cry of horror she jumped up out of her bed shrieking, " Fire ! Fire ! Fire ! "

Panic-stricken she ran into the room where Jane and Eliza Neck were sleeping, and frantically shook them into wakefulness with the startling news that the house was aflame. She might almost have spared her words, because by this time the smoke was pouring up the staircase from the rooms below in a thick, suffocating cloud.

The horrified woman saw at a glance that Miss Keyse had been foully done to death. Her head had been practically hacked off, and lay in a pool of blood which the flames were fast drying up.

John Lee made his appearance.

"What's the matter, Eliza?" he cried. "We'll soon put the fire out."

"Look at that, look at that!" screamed the woman, pointing to the body on the floor.

"Good God!"

"Go over to the Carey Arms at once and bring assistance," said Eliza sharply. "We may be in time to catch the murderer. Move yourself," she added.

But Lee did not go then and there. Instead of which, he went towards the stairs and put his arm around the waist of Jane Neck, who was then feeling her way down. Eliza, always a woman of action, had first of all opened the windows to let out the smoke. Then, after kneeling down beside her mistress and realising that she was beyond all help, she rushed out into the night crying for someone to lend assistance. There was no answer, naturally; she went back into the house of death where her sister Jane, Elizabeth Harris, and John Lee were staring at the ghastly sight on the dining-room floor. The fire had not made much headway, and now, when Eliza Neck again imperiously ordered him to run to the Carey Arms, Lee went off.

The landlord of the public-house came hurrying back with him, but it was little he could do. Miss Keyse lay dead and the fire had already practically been put out by the three women. But Jane Neck, also a determined, self-possessed woman, had been utilising the intervening time to probe the tragic mystery of this terrible crime in the night. She had already carefully examined all the doors and windows in the house, and to her intense mystification they were, with the exception of the windows

which her sister had opened and the front door through which John Lee had gone out, undisturbed.

The dining-room smelt strongly of paraffin, and, judging by the state of the furniture in the room, oil had been poured all over the place. Energetically setting to work, the landlord, Walling, told Lee to bring him a hatchet with which he could cut away the smouldering rafters of the room. Strangely enough, Lee had the one belonging to the house close handy. The other servants did not remember then, though they did afterwards, that the hatchet was usually kept in the woodshed outside ; in the confusion and horror of the death of their mistress they were not in a fit state to know what they were doing.

Shortly before the dawn the police arrived and at once began a minute search of the house. It speedily became evident that Miss Keyse had first of all been done to death, after which her murderer had attempted to burn the house down. There were traces of paraffin everywhere, even in Miss Keyse's bedroom. In a kitchen drawer they found a big knife stained with blood, and crumpled up in the same place a ball of paper saturated with blood.

Then, suddenly, came a startling discovery which seemed to point directly to the murderer. Jane Neck, with a cry of horror, saw blood on her nightdress !

"Where can that have come from ?" she exclaimed. "It must have been from you," she said, pointing a dramatic finger at John Lee. "You put your arm around me as I was coming downstairs."

The sergeant of police turned to Lee.

"What do you know about this ?" he asked.

"I can't say. I must have cut myself opening one of the windows. Look," he added, "there is blood on my hand."

By now thoroughly suspicious, the sergeant proceeded to question Lee. He had heard what Eliza Neck had to say, particularly that she had heard Lee moving about

as she rushed downstairs. But Lee had an altogether different story to tell.

"I was fast asleep all the time," he informed the sergeant. "I never heard anything going on at all."

"You didn't hear anything?" said the sergeant, incredulously. "Why, you sleep just there, don't you?" pointing to a small room which led off the dining-room. "Do you mean to tell me Miss Keyse was killed without you hearing a thing?"

Lee sullenly persisted in his story, and the sergeant, ordering one of his men to see that Lee did not get away, proceeded to conduct another examination of the house.

Where had the paraffin come from? What murderer could have crept into this lonely little cottage in the small hours of the morning with a can of paraffin to murder an old woman and then set fire to the place?

"I'll tell you where the paraffin came from," cried Jane Neck. "He," again pointing to Lee, "had some in his bedroom. I saw it only yesterday morning. See if it is there now."

It was not there. One of the constables went into Lee's room and certainly found the can, but it was empty and bore incriminating evidence of the use to which it had been put. Furthermore, it was smeared with blood, and without any further hesitation the sergeant caught hold of Lee, slipped a pair of handcuffs on him, and said: "Lee, I am going to charge you with the murder of Miss Keyse."

Beyond protesting his innocence, Lee said nothing worth recording. He was taken away up the winding path he had trod so often, and placed in a cell at Torquay, where, on being searched, there was found on his clothing several of Miss Keyse's white hairs. Three times he appeared at the police court before he was committed for trial, and during the intervening period the entire countryside seethed with the anger that steadily grew against him.

With the actual trial of John Lee, which took place at Exeter before Mr. Justice Manisty, there is no necessity to dwell at any length. He was defended by a lawyer who, forsooth, had little enough to put forward. A hypothetical case alleging that the murder had been committed by a secret lover of Elizabeth Harris, who had been found in the house by Miss Keyse, made no impression whatever on the jury. The prisoner was found guilty, and in passing sentence of death the judge took occasion to make the following remarks :

" It may be thought," he said, " that a display of unconcern such as that exhibited by the prisoner is suggestive of innocence. I do not think it is so. In all my judicial career the most dangerous criminals I have known are those of a calm and self-possessed manner, such as the man you now see before you."

In the hushed court, while sentence of death was being passed upon him, Lee stood up apparently the soul of unconcern.

" Your lordship is wrong in saying that I am not innocent," said the condemned man unemotionally. " I trust in my God, and He knows that I am not guilty of the crime of murder."

Then he was taken below to the cells, leaving behind him, it is safe to say, not one person on whom his protestations made the slightest impression.

Now comes the climax—and the anti-climax—of this noteworthy tragedy. The sheriffs made arrangements for Lee's execution on February 24, exactly three weeks after sentence had been passed upon him. One may be permitted to remark in passing that executions have always been extremely rare in Devonshire, and one does not require undue imagination to realise that the preparations for such gruesome happenings would have to be carried out by men totally inexperienced. Be that as may.

When Berry, the executioner, arrived at Exeter Gaol two or three days before the fatal date he inspected the gallows that had been erected in a coach-house in the prison yard. He expressed his dissatisfaction to the Governor with what he found, but that dignitary, probably resenting criticism of his efforts, gruffly told Berry that everything would go off smoothly.

On the Sunday and Monday prior to the execution rain fell continuously. On the Tuesday morning, when Lee was to die, the weather had cleared considerably. At eight o'clock the Governor, the chaplain, the sheriffs, the executioner and his assistant entered upon their nauseous duty of despatching a fellow-creature to his death.

Lee gave them no trouble whatever. He allowed the hangman to pinion him, and the procession, headed by the chaplain reading the Service for the Dead, set off for the gallows.

No time was lost, because whatever crime a man has committed, it is merciful that the law shall exact its penalty without unnecessary prolongation of the agony which such scenes must always entail.

The condemned man was placed on the drop and the executioner adjusted the noose under his neck. The lever which should have sent him to his death was pulled, but to the utter amazement and horror of everybody present, the drop refused to work. Instead of the two flaps on which Lee stood coming asunder as the executioner moved the lever, they remained fast.

The Governor promptly ordered the doomed man to be taken off the drop to see what had happened. Again and again Berry tugged at the lever without being able to move the drop. Several of the prison warders stamped upon it without effect.

It was a ghastly, terrible situation. The drop worked successfully enough without anyone on it, whereupon the

Governor ordered Lee to be placed on it again. Once more the noose was adjusted over his head and again the lever was pulled. Still the drop refused to work!

Lee himself was probably in a state of semi-consciousness from sheer terror. In muffled tones from beneath the cap that had been placed over his head he shouted out for his agony to end. The audience, in an even more pitiable plight, could stand it no longer.

"Take him away, take him away!" cried everyone to the Governor. Warders caught hold of Lee and escorted him back to his cell in a state of collapse. A strong dose of brandy was administered to him, while the executioner and the prison officials frantically set about discovering the cause of this astounding anti-climax.

Berry was under the impression that the rain had swollen the wood of the drop, and for something like twenty minutes he and his assistant feverishly chiselled away the edges where the two ends met, expecting that they would thus cause it to work properly. Berry reported to the Governor that everything was now in readiness, and for the third time John Lee, trembling in every limb, was placed upon the scaffold with the rope around his neck.

Anxiously, shaking with the horror of the scene, the officials stood by as Berry again pulled the lever. It did not act; the drop remained fast, and with a cry which contained in it fear as well as overwhelming emotion, the chaplain jumped forward and begged the Governor to put an end to the harrowing spectacle.

One may imagine the Governor was only too relieved to order that Lee be taken back to his cell while he decided what was to be done. Lee himself looked a dead man as he was put on his prison bed and the cap drawn from his face. Then he fainted, while the crowd outside, morbidly waiting for the black flag that denoted the execution of the law's sentence, excitedly speculated why no sign of death had been given.

" They can't hang him ! " the whisper ran through the thousands of people outside the gaol. There were many who remembered the calm protestations of innocence the prisoner had made at the conclusion of his trial. Superstitious folk saw in this dramatic reprieve from death the hand of the Almighty, and where there had once been widespread agitation for the hanging of a cruel and callous murderer, there now arose a deafening clamour that he should be reprieved.

The Governor, of course, had no option but to communicate with the Home Secretary as to what he should do. Inquiries were at once instituted to ascertain the cause of this ghastly farce, and as far as could be discovered it arose from the fact that the iron staves which supported the drop were not of the proper thickness. When Lee was placed upon the platform they bent beneath his weight and were jammed with such force that the supporting bars could not move far enough for the rods to slip through the grooves. Whatever the reason, the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, very properly came to the conclusion that public sentiment would not tolerate any man being subjected to such an ordeal again. He made an order to reprieve John Lee and substituted the customary alternative of penal servitude for life.

Lee himself received the news of his salvation with the calmness he had exhibited from the beginning of his arrest.

" I have said I am innocent," he told the Governor when the news of his reprieve was communicated to him. " I knew that God would not permit me to be hanged for a murder I never committed."

A blasphemous hypocrite without a doubt, though there were thousands of people in England who saw Divine intervention in this miraculous escape from death. The authorities, however, possessed no delusions about the guilt of John Lee ; they sent him to Portland Prison, where

he served his full twenty years, when he was released on ticket-of-leave and immediately afterwards returned to his native Devon.

Strangely enough, he felt no shame in going back to the scenes of his boyhood days. Still a young man, he obtained employment with a local farmer. Mr. Basil Thomson, who was Governor of Dartmoor Prison at the time, happened to be out driving in a dogcart one day with one of his senior officers, when he met a man leading a stallion up a narrow lane. He was an uncouth-looking fellow, sullen of face and slovenly dressed.

"Do you know who that is, sir?" asked the officer of Mr. Thomson, jerking his thumb behind. "It's John Lee, the man they couldn't hang."

Lee passed on and nothing more was seen of him. Probably he found it rather difficult to get a living in Devon, because some little time later he migrated to London, where he found a place in a public-house in the Borough. There he became a tremendous attraction; the inhabitants of that delectable neighbourhood used to find a morbid satisfaction in gazing at the man who couldn't be hanged. The better to give play to the story he had to tell of his experiences on the scaffold, Lee went without a collar, and of a night time, before a dense audience, he would relate in graphic detail, with illustrations, what it felt like to have the hangman's rope round your neck.

There we may leave him.

A STRANGE STORY OF THE
SOUTHERN SEAS

A STRANGE STORY OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS

I

ON the north-west coast of Western Australia, two thousand miles from Fremantle, the chief port of the State, there stands a lonely little town which should be better known to the world. It is called Broome, and takes its name from one of the West Australian Governors who reigned in the early 'nineties. Broome is the headquarters of the pearl fisheries of the Southern Hemisphere; from its tiny, wind-sheltered harbour hundreds of small luggers set sail to scour the bed of the Indian Ocean in search of that most delicate of all gems, the jewel that man, with all his arts and crafts, has never succeeded in improving—the pearl.

Standing on the edge of the never-resting Indian Ocean with countless thousands of miles at its back leading into the barren lands of the Great Australian Desert, Broome is isolated from the world. Its only means of communication with civilisation are the telegraph to Perth the capital, and the steamer which once every three weeks makes the long journey from Fremantle to Wyndham right around the west and north-western coastline of the immense Australian Continent.

Broome that the richest cargo of all is taken aboard ; the pearls that represent the fruits of weeks of weary work in the tempestuous seas ; pearls white, cream, pink, grey, and black, from the tiny white seedlings sold by the ounce, to the great pear-shaped pearl worth thousands of pounds : pearls which before they adorn the bosoms of fair women have been responsible for many a dreadful tragedy.

In a blaze of molten red, which suffused the tropical clouds with indescribably gorgeous shades of pink, the sun was slowly disappearing beneath the horizon in that part of the Indian Ocean which washes the north-west coast of Western Australia.

It was the Australian summer—early February, to be precise—and the party of five men who watched the ball of red fire throwing its strange glow across sea and sky sat silent under the spell of a sunset whose magnificence is only realisable by those who have sailed the tropical seas in summertime.

The party was seated on the verandah of the Marine Hotel in the pearling town of Broome, smoking their pipes and revelling in the beautifully cool breeze blowing from the south-west which had come to ease the tortures of the dreadfully hot day. Memories such as only the rippling of the wind across a placid sea can evoke had taken the place of the desultory conversation. Commonplace talk seemed a banality in the presence of Nature revealing her secrets to the full, the vision of day turning to night, with practically no disturbing factor to discount the beauty of clouds which passed from white to pink, from pink to purple, and thence in rapid changes to the gleaming darkness of a starlit tropical night.

One of the group was a bronzed, white-haired old man, with Australian written all over his lean, square-jawed face. He was Captain Robert Summers, more familiarly known as "Old Bob," famous from Wyndham in the

north to Albany in the south as owning more pearling luggers than any other man in Western Australia.

The old pearler's companions were a strange sight in Broome, which houses nearly every coloured nationality in the world, but rarely sees together four fresh-complexioned young Englishmen, with that delicate pink colouring which seems effeminate to many people, but which is nevertheless the distinguishing hallmark of the well-bred Englishman all the world over. There was certainly no need for the young fellows to have told the experienced Captain Summers that they were fresh from the Old Country ; their accent, their speech and mannerisms, to say nothing of their clothes, all singled them out from the rougher, native-born Australians.

Mutually attracted from the beginning, the young Englishmen had frankly told the old captain the reason for their presence in this out-of-the-way corner of the Australian Commonwealth. They had come out to take up pearl-fishing, and had been introduced to Captain Summers as one of the few men in the town competent to give them sound, disinterested advice.

" So you've come out to be pearlers, eh ? " grunted the Captain, after a long spell at his pipe. " Well, I've been in nearly every get-rich-quick rush in Australia during the past forty years and more. I was one of the first on the Victorian goldfields in the early 'seventies ; I humped my swag over two hundred miles with hardly a drop of water when they discovered opal at White Cliffs in New South Wales in the early 'eighties ; and I found my way to Broken Hill within a week of the silver being discovered. I was one of the first of the many thousands of fellows who rushed the ships from Sydney and Melbourne when the news came through that Charlie Hannan had struck immensely rich gold at Kalgoorlie.

" But "—and the Captain took his pipe out of his mouth and emptied the ashes before continuing—" I

would like to tell you boys before you get any farther that nothing I have ever touched harboured such a choice collection of thieves and cut-throats as pearl-fishing.

"As you only got in on the steamer from Fremantle this morning," the Captain went on, "you have had no chance of taking a look at Broome and the people it contains. But I don't mind telling you now that at one time or another this town has housed most of the scum of the world east of Suez. We get all sorts—Australians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, an occasional German, aboriginals, Japanese, Cingalese, Manilamen, Malays, Hindoos, Chinamen, Afghans, and a few plain unadulterated niggers. Our female population, with the exception of the wives of the magistrate and the doctor, consists mostly of French and Japanese women, whose profession will be fairly obvious. Nearly all the trading is done by the Japs; they own all the stores, and finance half the luggers which sail from here. Thank heaven the Government won't license them as hotel-keepers. My friend Flannagan, who keeps this place, is a decent-minded Irishman, who will have no truck with the roguery which goes on in this town night and day. But there are dozens of grog-shanties in the place, where the pearling crews can get from Japs and Chows all the drink they want—and more.

"Tell me, what put this idea of pearl-fishing into your heads?" queried the Captain. Dinner in the insufferably hot dining-room below, with its thousands of flies, was over, and the old man, glad of the chance to talk with somebody from "home," cut another fill from his plug of American tobacco, and settled himself down in his deck-chair for a long evening's chat.

"What made you think there was money in it?" he added in the pause which followed his question.

None of the four Englishmen, their ardour temporarily damped, attempted to answer the question for some little time. The romance of pearl-fishing had gripped their

imaginations while they were serving together in the Rifle Brigade during the war. In the long hours in the trenches they had debated over and over again what they should do when the war was ended ; whether to go back to the offices they had been employed in, or whether they should take Fortune by the hand and go whither she should lead them. Pearl-fishing, with all its wonderful glamour, had caught their adventurous minds ; unknown were its hardships, uncared for its dangers and uncertainties. Sufficient for four willing spirits was it that out of the depths of the sea it was still possible for such as were hardy enough to win a fortune, masters of their own fate, shaping their own destiny, and untrammelled by the fetters of civilisation.

Nothing that had happened on the voyage out from England had in any way cooled their enthusiasm. In their joint names of Lionel Torrington, Robert Henry Cox, Arthur Drake, and William Kent, there had been cabled to the Bank of West Australia in Perth the sum of £1,850, which represented their combined capital after paying expenses for the trip out. Experienced Australians on the P. & O. liner *Marmora* had smiled doubtfully, but tolerantly, on the quiet confidence of the young Englishmen, and told them to seek the advice of reputable white men in whatever they bought or hired.

It was in the middle of January that the small party disembarked at Fremantle and made their way by ferry-steamer up the beautiful Swan River to the flourishing little town of Perth, while the *Marmora* continued her journey eastward, with many a shake of the head on the part of passengers who knew something of the pearlers of Thursday Island.

Much to their surprise, the four learned that there was no railway to their destination, Broome ; the only means of reaching the home of the West Australian pearling industry was to wait for the next steamer, which did not sail for another ten days.

In their attitude towards pearling for "new chums" the people of Perth were no more assuring than the passengers on the *Marmora*. "You'll find it damned hot up there," said one incredibly lean and brown miner from the northern goldfields staying at their hotel. "Your pretty complexions won't last long, either. Take my advice, and get a job on a lugger owned by some decent white man, and see whether you like the game before you buy a boat of your own. I don't know if you've ever been to sea for a month in a small boat full of Japs and niggers; if not, you will find it somewhat different from a 12,000-ton mail boat."

This excellent advice had been repeated more or less by Captain Drew, of the A.U.S.N. Company's ship *Arawatta*, which had carried them up to Broome. "Come ashore with me, boys," said the stout skipper when his vessel had dropped anchor in the roadstead outside Broome, "and I'll introduce you to Bob Summers. He's the man to put you right, if anybody is." The introduction had been duly made, and the gathering on the hotel verandah was the sequel to a promise of "Old Bob's" to have a talk with the young Englishmen and see what could be done for them.

The long silence which followed Captain Summers' last question was broken by Torrington. "Well, Captain," he said, rather confusedly, "you know things were rotten for us ex-officers in England after the war. Nobody wanted us; they told us we had got out of touch with the business while we were away in France; they told us to our faces, the dirty skunks, that we were not worth much more than the salary of an office boy. Anyhow, we four resolved to get out. Besides our gratuities, we had a little money saved up, and after thinking it all out, we came to the conclusion that pearl-fishing was one of the few things where a man might do well with a small capital."

"Um," said the Captain musingly, "you have taken on a pretty stiff contract, I can tell you. Where on earth some of you Englishmen get your ideas puzzles me. Pearl-fishing is like many other things in this world—distance lends enchantment to it. I suppose you imagine that all you have to do is to sail out with a couple of divers, open the oysters, take the pearls out, and get back to port with a ready-made fortune, eh ?

"Now, as a matter of fact, pearling is damnable hard work, and just about the most uncertain thing in the world. You have to sail out in a small lugger, seven or eight of you, and live together for three or four weeks cooped up like fowls in a temperature that bears the strongest resemblance to Hades any of you are ever likely to experience. You have to keep and live with native divers and a native crew, and I can tell you the stink of a nigger after a fortnight in a lugger is something to remember to your dying day. They don't wash, my young friends, and, what is more, you can't make them.

"You won't be able to spare much water for washing yourselves, either, for there is no running ashore and getting a supply from the nearest village pump, as you might do along the Kentish coast. I don't deny that there is a certain element of attractiveness about sailing up and down unexplored coasts, landing when you feel like it on shores never before trodden by mankind. But, as you will find in time, you miss the creature comforts of life. The northern and central parts of this country are about the most barren on God's earth. Why, even in a town of this size we have to rely on artesian bores for our water supply ; you will see the aboriginals peddling it around in small tanks.

"However, the water is only a trifle ; for washing purposes you can always have a dip in the sea. Most likely you will need it after you have lived in the vicinity of thousands of rotting oysters for weeks. Some skippers

I know dry their oysters out on their decks. Not for me, thank you ! I prefer to chance the risks of going ashore and drying out there. If I have lost a good many pearls that way, I have kept my boats from stinking like a cess-pool.

" The real trouble, boys, which I am coming to, is the last. There is not a pearler of any size in this town who does not lose thousands of pounds' worth every year. I am not speaking of the trepang and *bêche-de-mer* men, for they measure their catch by sheer bulk. I mean the actual pearls which the Cingalese, Manilamen, and Malays steal when they are opening the shells. You cannot watch them night and day, and it is absolutely impossible to search them. They secrete pearls in their hair, in their ears, under their arms, and even in their nostrils.

" Once they get ashore with the pearls in their possession, your chance is gone. You can take a walk round the *fan-tan* and *pak-a-pu* shops of a night, and the odds are that you will find all your crew gambling away as hard as they can—with your pearls. When John Chinaman conducts a gambling-den, he doesn't mind what he takes by way of currency. He will take pearls, and he will take women, especially if they be white. There is not a Jap or an Afghan in the town who does not buy pearls, stolen or otherwise, the former for preference. My friend Flannagan bars serving niggers of any description in this place with drink, but they get it all the same. The Japs sell them cheap whisky, gin, brandy, anything that comes up from Fremantle. Take a walk round the town with me to-night ; I'll show you some of the types you'll have to be shipmates with. Most of them would cut your throat for a shilling, to say nothing of a valuable pearl. I don't know what it is, but up in this God-forsaken hole men go mad. Perhaps it is the absence of all domestic life ; perhaps it is the heat. We get four or five months

in the year with the temperature anything up to one hundred and twenty degrees in the shade. If it wasn't for the sea breeze every afternoon, I verily believe nobody could live here.

"Whatever you do, never take any drink when you go out after pearls. Take a small bottle for emergencies if you like, but for God's sake never let your niggers have anything! You have never seen a Malay run amok, or you would know what I mean. Drink is the cause of all the trouble in this place. The hard, monotonous life in the luggers makes the men moody and quarrelsome, and when they get back with their month's pay they take to drink as naturally as any decent white man rushes for a cool bath and a change of clothing. If the men had only their pay to squander, we owners wouldn't mind so much; that would be spent in a couple of days, and they would then be compelled to sign on for another trip or starve. But with very few exceptions they all have a stolen pearl or two to sell. If ever you should see a particular nigger hanging around this town for a fortnight, and probably drunk most of the time, you can safely bet that he has had a good supply of stolen pearls. There is nothing much you can do. Have them arrested and searched if you like; there is precious little to be found. If they have pearls on them, no skipper can swear they are his, although he knows jolly well they are. We don't want to keep them in gaol, for the simple reason that nobody wants the job of looking after them. The great thing is to get hold of the man who carries the stolen pearls down to Perth.

"I need hardly tell you," the Captain said bitterly, "that the Japs and the Afghans don't do that. Oh dear, no. Our little brown brother is much too artful for that. He gets a white man to do his dirty work. I daresay you brought a few commercial travellers up on the boat with you from Fremantle. Most of them will be all right,

but one or two call themselves travellers when their real business is nothing but buying stolen pearls. Almost invariably they have anything up to a thousand pounds in banknotes in their pockets, a sum no honest traveller would have the slightest use for. They carry samples, these pearl-buyers, certainly, and book a few orders, mostly from the Japs who have stolen pearls to sell. They pay cash, and don't bother about the receipt. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that these infernal scoundrels occasionally get hold of two or three thousand pounds' worth of pearls for less than five hundred pounds. You don't get the wily Jap sending anything through the post, because he knows the authorities examine everything on the steamer on the way down to Fremantle. No ; he takes a low price in Broome, gets the cash down, and blandly denies all knowledge of the transaction if he is questioned."

The old Captain paused for a few moments and relit his pipe.

" I hope I'm not boring you boys, am I ? " he inquired.

" No, no," replied all four at once ; " it's just what we want to know."

" Well, before I go any further, one of you run down to the bar and ask Flannagan to let you have five of the coolest drinks in the place, and charge them up to me."

II

When the drinks had arrived Captain Summers recommenced. " During the fifteen years I have been a pearler I have had little cause to complain of my luck. I always kept a strict watch on my crews, and by making it a practice to engage the same men time after time, and paying them a good percentage on the lugger's earnings,

[managed to keep them fairly straight. Mind you, no power on earth can make a nigger honest. Cingalese, Malays, Philippine Islanders, and all the other particular brands of heathen you find out here are quite primitive in their reasoning. 'Finding's keeping' is a natural enough motto with them, as it is with a good many white people ; so it is up to any pearler who wants to make a living to adopt whatever measures he thinks fit to safeguard his property.

" The largest and most valuable pearl I ever owned was a great, black pear-shaped thing, dotted all over with little excrescences, which added immensely to its value. Black pearls, I may tell you, are freak gems, and fetch a fancy price if you happen to get hold of a really good one. They are not really black, of course ; just a sheeny steel colour, although you do get an occasional dark one. As ornaments they don't compare with the beautiful little pink pearls which we sometimes find in small, immature oysters. However, they seem to possess a wonderful fascination for some people, so it is not for me to complain.

" They say most of the great gems of the world possess bloodstained histories, and I'm sure my black pearl, which I christened 'The Rosalie,' had about as horrible a christening of blood as any of the famous jewels of the Middle Ages.

" Between ten and eleven years ago I was just beginning to feel my way in the pearling industry. By keeping off the drink and refusing to gamble—two things which ruin half the lugger-owners in this town—I had managed to scrape together four ships of my own, and was doing fairly well.

" There was a great friend of mine in Broome about that time, a chap named Charlie Edmonds, who was going to the dogs fast through drink. One day I took him aside and said, " Look here, Charlie, if you don't pull yourself together, your wife will be a widow before long.

The best thing you can do is to get back to Perth and have a shot at something else. I'll buy your boat from you, and you can catch the steamer to Fremantle on Saturday.

"Well, after a good deal of bluster, Charlie consented. I gave him one hundred pounds in cash, and paid the remainder of the purchase-money, eleven hundred pounds, into his credit at the local bank, telling the manager, old Tom Taylor, not to let Charlie have it in Broome under any circumstances.

"After I had got Charlie aboard the steamer, I went to look at my new purchase, which was lying in a creek to the north of the town being refitted and overhauled. She was named *Rosalie*, and I must say I have never seen a prettier lugger anywhere between here and Torres Strait.

"Charlie's mate, Berry, was loafing around when I arrived on the scene, and didn't seem in the least pleased when I told him Charlie had caught the steamer to Fremantle and was now on his way south. He knew all about the sale of the *Rosalie*, of course, but I fancy he had no liking for me as owner. For one thing, he knew I would not allow any drink aboard my vessels, a thing Charlie had always countenanced, to his own undoing. However, Berry was civil enough outwardly.

" 'Are you going to take me as skipper?' he asked.

"White men are scarce enough in Broome at all times, and were particularly so then, and I knew Berry to be quite a good seaman. He had need to be, with Charlie drunk most of his time.

" 'Well, Berry,' I replied, 'I am going to make the first trip in the *Rosalie* myself, and ask you to come as mate. If all goes well, I shall only make the one voyage. You will be my successor, and will share in the profits like all my other skippers.'

" 'Oh, all right,' growled Berry, 'though I don't see why I can't take the *Rosalie* out myself.'

“ ‘ Nothing of the sort,’ I said sharply. ‘ You know quite well that I strongly object to only one white man being on any lugger of mine. Even when you are skipping I shall not allow you to sail alone, if I have to get a man up from Fremantle. Nobody knows better than you that there is nothing the Malays would like better than to slash their kris into a white skipper and sail the boat back to their own islands.’ ”

“ ‘ You mean you believe in keeping a spy on board,’ sneered Berry.

“ ‘ If I thought you wanted watching I would give you the job at all,’ I retorted hotly. ‘ Do you want it or not ? ’ I asked, determined to settle the matter then and there.

“ ‘ Oh, I suppose so,’ he said.

“ ‘ All right,’ I replied. ‘ Let’s shake hands and quit squabbling.’ ”

“ Berry shook hands with me rather unwillingly, and we then proceeded to look over the boat and discuss requirements. The *Rosalie* was about a forty-ton boat and had plenty of accommodation for a native crew for’ard with a roomy cabin amidships for the white men. Berry told me all the old crew were ready to sign on again, and not wanting to be troubled with the matter, I told him they would do, with the exception that I was bringing a cook of my own, a Chinaman named Jim Tong, who had been with me for years. Always have a Chow for your cook in these parts of the world, boys, when you go out pearling. It will be mostly tinned meats and fish you catch yourself that you will have to eat, and a Chinaman knows more ways of preparing fish than all the rest of the cooks the world put together. Besides, most Chinamen are fairly honest, and it is risky being the only honest man aboard a pearling lugger.

“ Well, we got everything ready for sea in about ten days, with a special supply of air-piping for the diver

for I was minded to try some grounds that had never before been fished over, so far as I knew. For divers we had two Malays, who are the best in the world. They will stand double and treble the depth any white man will tackle. I've forgotten their names ; they were something unpronounceable, so I fell back on Berry's names for them—Tommy and Billy.

" The rest of the crew were two Manilamen, who are handy boatmen, and can open shell with the best in the world, and a Cingalese, whom Berry addressed as Herbert. I can't say I liked the look of any of them. It needed no great stretch of imagination to realise that Jim Tong was about the only man aboard who was to be trusted. However, I did not allow that fact to worry me unduly. I knew—nobody better—that if I wanted a crew of nothing but honest men, Broome was about the last place in the world to get them.

" I might tell you I carried my six-chambered Smith and Wesson pistol. I never went to sea without it.

" It was blowing hard when we made our way out to sea and beat up due north to a little bay which was not marked on any Government chart, but which I had reason to believe contained millions of oysters.

" Things went right enough during the four days we were tacking up the coast, and I was shrewd enough to let Berry understand that I had not definitely decided on the particular ground I was going to fish over. Once or twice we passed small pearling fleets, but did not stop. I was not minded to give anyone a clue to my destination ; and although Berry asked me more than once where we were going, I put him off by telling him I would stop at the first likely spot. We never met a soul after passing the pearling fleets, and ran up the coast for about three hundred miles, skirting mile upon mile of yellow sand and bush without any untoward happening. Berry gave me nothing to complain of in his behaviour, although

I thought he was a trifle too friendly with the Manilamen and the Cingalese.

"I was keeping a keen look-out myself, and about four o'clock in the afternoon recognised the little bay I was making for. Two long sand-spits covered with salt-bush and spinifex ran out into the sea, and formed one of the prettiest little anchorages I had seen for many a long day. But I wasn't bothering about beauty spots just then; it was pearls I was seeking. I had a shrewd idea that there would be millions of oysters lying on the bottom of that bay, and, as we proved during the following fortnight, I was quite right.

"I could have jumped for joy as we ran into the bay between the spits, for on neither of them was to be seen the slightest trace of oyster shells, which told me better than anything that no pearling fleet had ever visited the place before. You can always trace the visit of a fleet by the opened shells, to say nothing of empty tins and bottles. As soon as we had dropped anchor in the middle of the bay, which was the best part of a mile wide, we lowered the dinghy, Berry and I going ashore to have a look round.

"There was nothing much to be seen except bush and scrub. Ti-tree ran down almost to the water's edge, and there were plenty of parched-looking gum trees farther back. I was not worrying about being speared by aborigines who might come on us suddenly—the average Australian nigger is harmless enough provided you don't molest him. No; what I was after was a good drying-out ground, which would be in full view of the *Rosalie*, and at the same time not submerged at high tide.

"I suppose you boys wondered why the *Arawatta* did not tie up at the wharf when you arrived?" said the skipper, with a smile. "Unless you anchored out in the roadstead, you would have seen the *Arawatta* lying on her side in the mud early to-morrow morning. There is

a thirty-foot rise and fall in the tide in these parts of the world, so, when you drop anchor, always remember to lay well out.

"Well, as I was saying, I wanted a place which would enable me to keep an eye on my shell-openers. Eventually I decided on the elbow of the northern spit. There was a big patch of yellow sand there, and with my prismatic glasses I could easily pick up the slightest movement a couple of miles away. I meant the mate or myself to be ashore most of the time; but as I didn't particularly trust Berry, I had no intention of losing any valuable pearls just through the neglect of an elementary precaution. You boys will appreciate that after you have made a few trips.

"It being too late to send the divers down that afternoon, I brought the *Rosalie* to the side of the northern spit, and set the crew to giving her a good swilling down in preparation for the morrow. I personally overhauled every inch of the diving-gear, for pearl-fishing is a nasty, ticklish job. Nothing is easier for a diver handling large quantities of oysters down below than to cut his air-pipes. I have known any number of poor niggers lose their lives that way."

III

"Darkness had come when we had finished cleaning, hoisted one of our jibs, and sailed back to the middle of the bay, where I intended to begin diving in the morning.

"Never sleep off your lugger, boys," interposed the Captain. "If ever you should get marooned anywhere along this coast, God help you! Nothing else will. There is little or no water, hardly a steamer, and nobody except blacks for hundreds of miles.

"Berry and I spent the night together talking and smoking. He appeared amiable enough, and agreed with me that it was a likely place for good shells.

"Interrupting my story once again," said the skipper, 'I might tell you my opinion is that the West Australian coast must have been the oyster breeding-ground of the world. Down in the bed of the Swan River, in that part which runs between Perth and South Perth, there are literally hundreds of millions of oyster-shells. I suppose they have been washed up by the tides of hundreds of years, and have remained there. For a good many years past the Government has been dredging them out by the ton, supplying them crushed to the municipalities for road-making. Excellent footpaths they make, too; they are always dry as a bone.

"All the way up this coast, for the best part of a thousand miles, there are millions upon millions of sea oysters. But unless you strike a spot which shows promise of pearls, it is rarely worth opening more than a few thousand. It comes expensive to keep seven or eight men earning nothing. Besides, the men get terribly discontented, and won't stick it. The best plan is to up anchor and try somewhere else.

"To get back to my story. After a wonderfully tasty breakfast of freshly caught flathead which Jim Tong had got during the night, we brought out the diving-gear and the buckets, put the ladders over the side, and had the baskets ready to be ferried across to the spot where we were to open and dry.

"The spot we were lying over was about ten fathoms deep, and calm enough for anything, although, judging by the colour of the sun, just making its appearance over the edge of the ti-tree scrub, we were in for a blazer. I meant to examine the first lot of opened shells myself; so, after getting the first couple of baskets filled from the buckets sent up by the Malays, I rowed across with

the two Manilamen and the Cingalese, leaving Berry to wind the divers up when they had had enough.

"I was rather disappointed with the look of the oysters as they were opened by the Manilamen. They were much too fleshy, which meant that whatever pearls were in them would only be tiny seedlings. However, it was no use worrying over that. The Cingalese and I set them out to dry in the blazing sun, with periodical trips to the lugger to bring back more. Berry relieved me in the afternoon, and, on coming back about four, more or less confirmed my opinion that the oysters already opened were likely to yield little in the way of decent pearls.

" 'What are you going to do about it?' he asked after supper. 'Try somewhere else?'

" 'No,' I said. 'We'll wait and see how this lot dries out; and, under any circumstances I intend waiting until the divers get deeper down into the beds. Billy told me to-night it was the heaviest oyster-bed he had ever come across. If that is so, there must be millions of oysters underneath which have been accumulating there for years.'

" 'Oh, all right; please yourself,' Berry answered indifferently. 'It makes no odds to me, except, of course, the better we do, the more there is for all concerned.'

"At the end of three days the first batch of opened shells had dried sufficiently to enable us to realise that, far, luck was against us. Here and there we came to a few seed pearls of no value, but I persevered, as it was obviously a pearl-bearing ground, and therefore worth considerable trouble.

"Day after day we continued going through the shells as the sun dried them. I had warned both divers to keep to the one spot in the hope of getting at the older oysters, and after a week's gruelling work I could see by the colour of the shells, which were getting a deeper

" In the light of what happened subsequently, I suppose I must consider myself very fortunate ever to have heard that shouting on the shore. But very few men are capable of suppressing their feelings in the face of some extraordinary occurrence. Even the taciturn Berry gave way to excitement in this particular instance.

" ' What have you got ? ' I shouted, as soon as he came within hail.

" Berry stopped rowing a second, turned round in the boat, and held up between his thumb and finger something I could not recognise. ' A big black pearl ! ' he called back.

" I was nearly tumbling overboard with anxiety as Berry came up alongside, slung me the painter, and climbed over the gunwale.

" ' Let's have a look at it, quick,' I said.

" Perhaps the thoughtlessly sharp request offended him, for he gave me a very peculiar glance as he slowly hauled the pearl out of his pocket. ' Here you are,' he said sulkily, ' you needn't be in such a blasted hurry.'

" I took no notice for the time being, for I had grabbed the pearl from his fingers, and was staring at it in amazement.

" ' Good God,' I breathed, ' what a stroke of luck ! '

" I suppose it must have been the greater part of an inch long, almost as thick as my little finger, tapering away at one end. Its colour was a beautiful deep sheeny grey ; here and there I could discern traces where it had once been white. But most astounding of all was the way it was marked all over with little lumps, for all the world like pimples on the human body.

" I glanced up suddenly, to find Berry regarding me with a silent sneer.

" ' What do you think it's worth ? ' he asked.

" ' It's the faintest idea,' I said, determined to answer in a coolly provocative manner for the time being,

for I could appreciate the feelings of any man who suddenly finds a small fortune passing into the hands of another. 'If it was sold in the right market it might bring anything up to ten thousand pounds. It won't bring anything like that in Perth, of course, although there are plenty of buyers in Sydney and Melbourne who would jump at the chance of getting it.'

" 'I suppose we share?' growled Berry.

" 'You will get the ten per cent. of the net profits we agreed upon in Broome, though I don't say I shan't give you something extra in view of this,' holding up the black pearl. 'By the way, who actually found it?' I could see the two Manilamen standing on the beach looking towards us, doubtless wondering what we were arguing about.

" 'Oh, the younger one, Moro,' replied Berry.

" 'Good! He shall have a couple of hundred pounds for himself,' I said, carried away by my enthusiasm.

" 'What the blazes is the use of giving money to niggers?' Berry growled again. 'They will only drink it away.'

" 'So would a lot of white men,' was my reply which made him throw me another unpleasant look. 'In this case I intend everybody on board to share in the good luck, black or not; I'm not one of those owners who never give their crews a shilling beyond what they are actually entitled to.'

" I stowed the precious pearl away in my case, stepped into the dinghy, and rowed ashore to congratulate the Manilamen on their find.

" 'What for him be worth, boss?' asked Moro, with teeth oddly gleaming.

" Rather foolishly, Berry being with me, I repeated what I had told Berry on the deck of the *Rosalie*—about ten thousand pounds. Herbert, that Cingalese, had come

up to our little group, and joined in the hiss of amazement which greeted my statement.

“ ‘ You give um tot rum, boss ? ’ suggested Moro.

“ ‘ No got, Moro,’ I said, with a shake of the head. ‘ Plenty rum Broome.’

“ Well, I remained on the beach until eight o’clock that evening, feverishly opening oysters myself in the hope of coming across another big black pearl. So did Berry ; but neither of us had the slightest luck, and when dusk made it impossible to see any longer, we boarded the dinghy again and rowed out to the *Rosalie*. Jim Tong had lit our riding-light, and with the gleams which spread over the still water from cabin and galley our lugger made a pleasant little picture for a man who has unexpectedly had affluence presented to him.

“ Berry was very grumpy all through the appetising supper Jim Tong had specially cooked for the occasion, and after the meal was over excused himself from coming up on deck for a smoke and a chat by saying he was tired out and wanted to sleep.

“ I didn’t greatly mind, however. Jim Tong brought me my deck-chair, and I lay with my feet propped up on the rails, smoking my pipe in placid meditation and listening to the excited chatter in pidgin English which came from the fo’c’sle. So far as I could gather, both of the Malay divers were claiming the credit of sending up the shell which contained the black pearl ; while Moro, the Manila boy, was equally energetic in telling them that but for the expert manner in which he had opened the shell the pearl would probably never have been seen at all. The Cingalese alone had little to say. I heard his high treble now and then, apparently on some question of value, but took little notice of what he actually said. Gradually the balm of the warm, starry night took hold of me ; my pipe slipped from my lips, and I fell sound asleep.

" I awoke with a sudden start hours later. Jim Tong was shaking me by the shoulder, and I was wet through to the skin with the heavy sea-mist you get in the Indian Ocean. The native crew had long ago snored themselves to sleep on their mats. When I went into the cabin Berry was stirring restlessly in his bunk, muttering words I could not understand. I did not pay much attention to him, although, in the light of what happened later, I have often wondered since if it would not have been better to listen. As it was, I just tumbled into bed, placed my pearl-case under the pillow, and fell asleep again like an exhausted child.

" The following morning I had to decide what I was going to do—whether to return to Broome at once and bring back all my boats to fish the bay, or stay a few days longer, now that we had apparently come to the shell likely to contain the pearl-bearing oysters. Water was the primary consideration, and after looking at my two tanks I found there was just over a week's supply. Unless I could obtain some inland it was useless to think of staying ; so, putting my pistol in my pocket, I rowed ashore, telling Berry I meant to work north and south along the coast for a few miles in the hope of striking a fresh-water creek. I had no fear of anything happening in my absence, because I had all the pearls in my possession. I was willing to take the chance of any they might find in the short time I was away.

" Luck was dead against me. I spent all that hot, broiling morning tramping through the fly-infested scrub searching for water, but found nothing beyond a few salt-encrusted pools. Nor was there the slightest sign of any human being to tell me that water might be found somewhere adjacent.

" ' No good,' I told Berry when I got back to where they were examining shells. ' We shall have to work double shifts on all the shell we've got for the next two

days. I daren't risk trying to get back to Broome with less than five days' water supply. With this sou'-wester blowing, we'll be lucky to make it in that time. How have things gone this morning ? ' I added.

" ' Oh, fair,' replied Berry, digging out a dozen or so small pearls from his pocket. ' I'd sooner have that black pearl than a thousand of these.'

" ' I daresay,' I said idly, attaching no significance to what was but a natural remark.

" We spent the next two days working tremendously hard. I had both divers down at eight o'clock in the morning, leaving Jim Tong in charge of the life-lines and pumps, while Berry and I feverishly went through the opened oysters. Some pretty fair little pearls came our way, but nothing especially valuable ; and on the Thursday afternoon I told Berry to have all the remaining shells, opened and unopened, brought on board the *Rosalie* to be gone through on the voyage back to Broome. Those shells which had passed through our hands were to be buried along the sea-front, for I had no intention of letting anybody who might chance to land there know they were in the neighbourhood.

" We got away from the bay early on Friday morning with a stiff sou'-wester blowing in our teeth. Heavy cross-seas and the difficulty of keeping anything like a straight course made it impossible to examine the oysters we had brought aboard, so I contented myself with having them lashed down aft where the smell could not blow into our cabin. Curious how we worry over trifles, to the exclusion of real danger !

" Berry had been quiet enough for a couple of days, and I had no reason to suspect that any trouble was brewing. He hadn't much to do with the two Malays, for sailing the boat wasn't their job, but I noticed he seemed to be spending a lot of his time in the company of the two Manilamen and the Cingalese. Apparently

he was chivvying them around, getting the boat ship-shape against the time we got back to port, so I did not worry over it. Would to God I had !

" Sunday night came, and with it a new moon. The stiff breeze had died down considerably, and we were just pushing along nicely, both jibs drawing well, and the mainsail bellying out in that steady fashion which brings joy to the heart of the true sailor-man. Berry had been silent and grumpy all day, as usual, and I made no attempt to draw him out. To tell you the truth, I was sick and tired of the fellow, and meant to get rid of him as soon as we returned to Broome. His interests were not mine ; that I was absolutely certain of.

" I had sat in the stern of the boat most of the day opening oyster-shells, slipping a few small pearls into my pocket as a result. Berry and the Cingalese took turn and turn about with the wheel. By my reckoning we were not more than a hundred and fifty miles from Broome, and I thought if the breeze held good we ought to make Broome some time on Monday night. Now that we were getting in the track of the pearling fleets, we had to keep a strict look-out, and that night I took the wheel myself from eight till twelve, with two of the crew to work the boat as we occasionally went about.

" Nothing happened. Not a sign of a sail came our way, and at midnight, Berry, the Manilaman Moro, and the Cingalese relieved my watch. Dog-tired, I threw off my clothes, put both pistol and pearls under my pillow, and dropped sound off to sleep in less than five minutes.

" Dawn in summertime comes about four o'clock in these parts, so it cannot have been more than three, when I was awakened in the darkness by a dreadful scream from the deck almost immediately above my head. Out into the night it rang, a horrible shriek of agony, and for just the hundredth part of a second I thought I had

been having a nightmare. But up above I could hear a rushing and scurrying of bare feet pattering along the deck. Suddenly the shrieks rang out again, and above the terrible cries I could hear the voice of the mate shouting, ' Kill him, you —— fool ! '

" I was out of my bunk like a flash, my blood cold with the horror of I knew not what. Slipping my hand beneath my pillow, I grabbed my pistol, and, not forgetting to push the safety-catch over, rushed up the companion-way leading to the deck.

" My haste was my undoing—although quite likely it was the cause of my life being saved. No sooner had my head appeared than—crash !—something hit me between the eyes with terrific force. I had one brief, agonising remembrance of a dark form peering down at me, and then all vanished into oblivion.

" Well," said the Captain, passing his hand over his forehead, and then taking a long drink, " I must have come-to about twelve hours later. I opened my eyes to find myself lying on the floor of the cabin, my face and pyjamas covered with caked blood. Disgusting flies were buzzing all over me, trying to suck up the blood, and my head ached horribly. The *Rosalie* was rolling like a tub in a storm, making me feel even more sick. Despite my scattered senses, I was able to realise that it would not do for me to waste any time, so I dragged myself slowly and painfully up the companionway and crawled out on deck. The mainsail was flapping idly in the breeze, the boom swinging over now and then, making the lugger lurch badly in the trough of the waves, while both jibs were streaming far out over the bowsprit. It was hot enough out on deck in all conscience, although nothing comparable to that reeking cabin. A rest on a hatchway cooled my fevered head slightly, and after a spell I was able to stagger round the ship to see what had happened.

"I found the body of poor old Jim Tong lying in front of the galley, with his throat cut from ear to ear. His head had been almost hacked off. All around him were pools of congealed blood, smothered with flies. The body rolled backwards and forwards with the motion of the ship, but I was too weak to attempt to move it, or even cast it over the side. It was all I could do to prevent myself fainting again. Of Berry not a trace was to be seen, and I walked groggily up to the fo'c'sle, wondering whether anybody else was on board. But the fo'c'sle was empty; the men had gone off without even taking their few spare clothes. The ship's dinghy had also disappeared, and I realised that I was alone on the deserted lugger, with nothing but the body of my faithful cook to bear me company.

"In my troubles I had forgotten all about my pearls, but suddenly recollected them, and hurried back to the cabin. They were gone, sure enough. My pistol, which must have fallen down the companionway with me, was not to be found either, and I could see by the way my lockers and sea-chest had been smashed in that everything of value was missing. Even the bottle of brandy had gone.

"I felt inclined to sit down and cry over the wreck of all my rosy dreams, and for some few moments I believe I actually did. However, tears were no use. I could feel the breeze freshening, and knew that if I did not get steering-way on the lugger pretty quickly I was booked for a watery grave."

IV

"Never shall I forget the dreadful time which I suffered during the next few hours. As near as I could calculate, I was about seven or eight miles off the coast. Every few minutes the ship would work herself up into the wind,

and then swing round again as the mainsail caught the full strength of the breeze, the boom swinging across the deck and nearly tearing the bottom out of the *Rosalie*. The jib-stays had evidently been cut, for both sails were rattling and flapping out seawards. It was quite beyond my doubtful strength to crawl out for'ard and get them in, so I resolved to content myself with trying to catch the mainsail as it swung across, lashing the boom to the rails with a swinging rope, so as to secure a little play for steering. The breeze was carrying the boat landwards, back the way we had come, but anything was preferable to staying out at sea all through another night. I might have managed to steer for a few hours. Beating up against the wind to Broome, with nobody but myself to work the boat, was utterly hopeless.

"Well, I managed it after about a dozen tries. I grabbed the boom as it swung over, nearly got carried overboard, but contrived to slip a rope through the end-block, and fastened it to the rails with a couple of turns and half-hitches. Then I made a rush to the wheel, which was swinging loosely from one side to the other, and gradually brought the *Rosalie* end-on to the breeze.

"I can't tell you how thankful I felt as the boat slowly came round and started pushing her way through the water. Once I could make land, I felt hopeful of getting back to Broome some day, although I realised that, short of the remote chance of being sighted by another lugger, the prospects of my reaching home except by walking were practically nil.

"I needn't dilate on the anxieties I suffered before I managed to beach the *Rosalie*. Two or three times I thought she was going to heel right over with the pressure on the mainsail, and I dared not desert the wheel to ease her off a little. I chose the alternative of coming up into the wind when things looked dangerous, the result being that it must have been two hours before we drifted on

to the beach and stuck fast in the sand. As soon as this happened I contrived to lower the mainsail and jibs, reefing them up as best I could. My head still ached terribly, but I was feeling much better, and clambered overboard into the shallow water and waded ashore, still barefooted and in my pyjamas.

" Nothing but dry, barren country was to be seen anywhere. There were the usual, apparently endless miles of yellow sand stretching away into infinity, the same old sand-hills covered with white-flowering ti-tree, millions of flies, and the roar of the surf crashing on the beach. Lonely ! There is no place more desolate on God's earth than this part of the West Australian coast which stretches from Broome to Wyndham. Nobody lives there, for the simple reason that there is nothing to live on.

" Still, it was no use pining. I had to decide what I intended doing, and I mighty soon made up my mind. Not for all the pearls in the Southern Hemisphere would I sleep on that bloodstained boat, with its nauseous reek of a dead man's blood. The yellow sands of the beach were good enough for me, and I spent close on three hours climbing slowly and painfully up and down the side of the *Rosalie*, bringing off everything likely to be of use to me. I ransacked Jim Tong's galley from top to bottom, after first dragging his body for'ard, and carried ashore every particle of food to be found. It wasn't much, to be sure. Berry and his villainous accomplices had pretty well stripped the lugger of everything. Luckily they had not taken all the fishing-tackle, so I felt no qualms about starvation.

" My greatest stroke of good fortune came when I went to look at the water-tanks. I fully expected every drop to have been drained off ; instead of which, my scoundrelly crew had apparently been content with helping themselves and then hurrying off. I had no doubt they

were somewhere on the sea between myself and Broome, and I wished them joy in trying to sail the ship's little dinghy if it happened to blow hard. Fourteen-foot boats, even if they do possess a mast and a bowsprit, are not built to carry five heavy men in the Indian Ocean. You have only to see even the large luggers which get wrecked in the gales along this coast to realise that.

"About the last thing I did that night was to fasten one of the jibs around Jim Tong's body. The task turned me quite sick, and it was a long time before I could pull myself together sufficiently to make a running bowline and swing the remains overboard. However, I managed it at last, and dragged the body up under the ti-trees, where I scraped a rough hole and rolled it in.

"By the time I had finished darkness had set in. I made a fire with some brushwood, feeling I should go mad without light of some kind. The blaze of the bushes put me in better heart, and it was in comparatively cheerful mood that I filled one of the ship's kettles with some of the precious water and made myself a huge basin of tea. That, with a substantial meal of potted tongue, pineapple, ship's biscuit and cheese, topped off by a pipe, made a new man of me. I lay down that night with my blanket over me, watching the millions of stars in the sky, and thanking God for even the small mercies that had been granted me. I knew I had been left for dead in my cabin, and only the intervention of Providence had prevented my throat being cut like that of my poor cook, sleeping his last sleep under the scrub behind me.

"Morning came, and with it the problems of the future. It was obviously impossible to remain where I was on the off-chance of a passing lugger picking me up. On the low-lying coast I should never be seen by a small boat. I spent the day pottering about, amongst other things heaping up a big mound of bushes and sand over the grave of the Chinaman whose death-cry had

been my salvation. I also caught a few of the big King George whiting with my fishing-tackle. Altogether, I felt quite comfortable, although I knew I should have to be making tracks before long, if only on account of the water.

"Three days elapsed before I could decide what to do. I did not know definitely, of course, but thought the distance to Broome must be somewhere between one hundred and fifty and two hundred miles, which, with careful use of my strength, I ought to do in a week. I reckoned to do most of my travelling along the beach, taking a rest from about one to four, when the heat of the day is greatest. How to carry sufficient water was my worst trouble. I had no hope of finding any *en route*, and could not think of any suitable receptacle, until I suddenly remembered that I had seen stowed away in the sail-locker three or four canvas water-bags. I climbed over the rail of the *Rosalie* like a madman, wrenched the locker open, and shouted for joy as I found the bags hidden deep down behind a lot of old gear.

"At six o'clock next morning I started on my long tramp home. Three water-bags were slung around me, two on the waist, one from the shoulders. A bag of food, fastened on a rope which fitted under the armpits and over the shoulders, some fishing-tackle, and my deck shoes completed my outfit. It was heavy enough in all conscience, but anything was preferable to dying of thirst. I have seen the bodies of men who have died that way.

"All things considered, I had a surprisingly smooth time. The heat was terrible, of course, and I felt the want of enough drinking water. But I had the consolation of a dip in the sea morning and night, and that cooled me off and braced me up better than anything. I caught a few fish at night-time, and had them baked for breakfast in the morning, cooking them in the aboriginal way in wet sand with a fire on top. My worst trouble was flies by day and mosquitoes by night.

" I must have been within twenty or thirty miles of Broome—and feeling happy accordingly—when I came across something that drove the blood from my heart. Tramping up some low-lying cliffs to avoid a reef, I was astounded to see lying on the edge of the bay ahead a small boat. I knew it to be the dinghy of the *Rosalie*—premonition told me that ; but what I did not expect to see was the sight of two bodies lying on the sand face downward, without a sign of movement. I flung myself down instantly, and remained there for two hours, daring nothing beyond peering occasionally from a bush I had crept behind. Too well did I know the fate which would overtake me if the party ahead discovered me. They were not likely to allow another life to stand between themselves and safety. I spent that night in the bush, I don't mind confessing, without a wink of sleep, and not venturing to strike a match.

" During the night I worked my way round to the scrub at the back of the dead men, and when dawn came had a long and careful look to ascertain whether any trace of the other men was to be found. But I could see nothing, and on crawling closer to the dead bodies, I realised at once that there was no need to fear anything. It was the two Malay divers who had suffered the penalty of their sins. One had been shot through the head, presumably with my pistol ; the other had a stab in the back which must have cut his spine right in two. They had been dead some days, as was evident by the appalling stench, and in disgust I turned to the dinghy, which was drawn up on the beach some distance away. She had probably been leaking badly, and was even then half full of water, which accounted for the deserters abandoning her.

" I was not long in concluding that no good would result by my staying in that neighbourhood. The dinghy was useless, so I resolved to tramp on, though warily.

I left the Malays where they had fallen ; it was impossible to go near the bodies and cover them up. I pushed ahead, avoiding every piece of high ground, although by now I felt sure the remainder of the party had reached Broome some days previously.

" But I was to experience an even greater shock before reaching civilisation. About five miles out of Broome, just as I was beginning to pick up landmarks, I was attracted by a bush-fire away on my left. It had pretty well burnt itself out by the time I got on the scene, and I was tramping along the edge of it when I came across the body of another dead man. It was Berry, who lay face downwards in the still smouldering ashes, his right hand grasping my pistol, and a Malay kris sticking in his neck. I knelt down and felt the body, but it was quite cold ; and after searching in the pockets to ascertain if by any remote chance the pearls were still in his possession—which, of course, they were not—I pushed on. I was just about done up, what with the horrors I had gone through and a week's privation.

" I reached Broome about ten o'clock that night, taking a roundabout route to avoid being recognised, and made my way to the house of Frank Carter, the resident magistrate.

" ' Good God, man ! Where have you been ? ' Frank exclaimed as soon as he saw me. Perhaps his astonishment was not to be wondered at, for my face was raw and peeled with the salt water and the sun, my clothes were tatters, and I looked, and felt, a wreck generally.

" For two hours I sat in Carter's little office, with a stiff brandy-and-soda to help me, telling him what had happened. He could hardly believe his ears ; but after I had concluded he sent off for Ryan, the sergeant of police, to whom I gave a description of the two Manilamen and the Cingalese, who, I thought, would very likely

be somewhere round the town. I was in no condition to accompany them, so Ryan said it would be better to leave the matter over till the morning, when we could make a thorough search, and question some of the numerous buyers of stolen pearls in the town. I was quite certain my black pearl would be offered for sale sooner or later, and once we could get wind of the buyer, it would not be difficult to trace the seller. I slept that night in the resident magistrate's house, in the most comfortable bed I had known for weeks. Frank thought it better for me not to go into the town until all was ready for the man-hunt, and Ryan agreed."

"And what was the end of it all, Captain?" asked the four young Englishmen, as the old pearler seemed to have come to the end of his terrible story.

"Wait, and you'll hear," replied the skipper. "I thought my wretched black pearl had caused trouble enough in the world, but the morning was to bring to light another dreadful tragedy. Down on the beach below the wharf they found the dead body of a white man, his brains battered out by a heavy glass lemonade bottle. Clutched in his hand was the leather case in which I had kept my pearls.

"Everybody knew the fellow well enough. His name was Mendel, and his ostensible business was that of traveller for a firm of wholesale clothing manufacturers in Perth. We knew him better as the biggest buyer of stolen pearls who came to Broome. He flew at high game, and would touch nothing but high-class pearls. He was known always to carry about five or six hundred pounds in banknotes in his pocket, but when the police searched his clothing he was quite penniless. There was no trace of my black pearl, and, with the exception that we knew the murderers must be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Broome, we were just as wise as ever.

"Ryan, who knew his Broome as well as any man

breathing, put in some wonderful work in the next forty-eight hours. He and his men searched every lodging-house, *fan-tan* shop, and sly grog-shanty in the place, asking for news of two Manilamen and a Cingalese likely to be flush of money. They got hold of every Jap in the town who was suspected of trafficking in stolen pearls, and eventually elicited the information that three coloured men who seemed to have plenty of pearls to sell might possibly be found drinking in a shanty close by the creek where the luggers refitted.

"Late at night, Ryan, accompanied by three troopers, rode out to the shanty. With drawn pistols he and one of his men banged through the door, and unceremoniously ordered the crowd inside to hold up their hands.

" 'Where are those Manilamen and the Cingalese?' he shouted to the cringing Japanese who owned the place. 'Quick, or it will be the worse for you.'

"The Jap knew who was wanted all right. He took the sergeant into a little back room, where the three were found lying asleep on the floor, dead drunk. Calling in his other men, Ryan kicked the murderers awake, handcuffed one to each trooper, and marched them through the bush to the town gaol, where they were handcuffed properly and chained to staples in the wall. Slung around the neck of the Cingalese in a little leather bag they found the cause of all the trouble—my black pearl.

"Well, there isn't much more to tell," said the old man, with a deep sigh. "Frank Carter committed all three for trial on my evidence, and sent them down to Perth in the *Arawatta* to be tried. It was three months before they faced the judge, and during that time the Cingalese turned King's Evidence in the hope of saving his neck. I am glad to say it was all in vain, for, as was disclosed at the trial, it was the Cingalese that had engineered the whole dreadful conspiracy with Berry,

